An examination of the philosophies, behaviours and practices present within grassroots soccer, considering the perspectives of coaches and coach educators.

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PhD

2020

An examination of the philosophies, behaviours and practices present within grassroots soccer, considering the perspectivesof coaches and coach educators.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the

Faculty of

Health and Life Sciences

October 2020

ABSTRACT

The aim of the presented thesis was to explore the varying perceptions of coaching philosophy, behaviours and practice, held by grassroots soccer coaches and coach educators. The purpose of the study was to gain an insight into the philosophical considerations of grassroots soccer coaches, and how this was portrayed in their coaching practice. The research holds importance as there is currently an absence of philosophical thought in terms of coaching philosophy, with research spending minimal time exploring the axiological, ontological, epistemological and ethical viewpoints of coaches (Hardman & Jones, 2013). Due to this lack of clarity, coaching philosophy is not reflected in practice leading to a detached approach to coaching (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Furthermore, there is a lack of work focused on the prevalence of folk pedagogies and limits of reflective practices within grassroots soccer coaching which the study aimed to advance.

To begin to address this gap, research was undertaken within the context of grassroots soccer coaches. The research lasted over a period of three years, and consisted of a systematic review of literature, grassroots coach interviews, systematic coach behaviour observations and coach educator interviews. A mixed-method approach was taken, utilising a pragmatic theoretical framework. Data of a qualitative nature was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), whilst the observational data was analysed using the Coach Analysis Intervention System (CAIS: Cushion, Harvey, Muir & Nelson, 2012).

The main research findings outline that grassroots soccer coaches were not necessarily forthcoming in placing their philosophic enquiry highly in their role as a coach (Cushion & Partington 2014; Cushion *et al*., 2003). Furthermore, what was evident was an apparent disconnect between their discussions and intended practice. It seems that an understanding of philosophy might help grassroots coaches to develop a more consistent approach to their coaching. To lead the grassroots coaches towards this, coach educators should bring attention to what matters to said coaches, with the aim of delivering philosophically aligned coaching practice (Nash *et al*., 2008). The practical observations found that a prescriptive approach to coaching was dominant with the grassroots coaches, suggesting that the coaches are delivering practices that do not align with recommended, and age-appropriate, activities (Ford *et al*., 2010). For example, the coaches utilised a higher number of behaviours relating to instructions (46%) compared to questioning (29%), which may be useful information for coach educators to be aware of. Furthermore, the role of reflection was not highlighted by grassroots coaches as a useful activity in terms of connecting their philosophy to their practice, nor to develop overall as coaches. When discussing such considerations with the coach educators, there was

a disparity between the acknowledged importance of reflection, and the time spent in a formal learning environment,meticulously teaching reflection with the grassroots soccer coaches. This suggests that minimal consideration is given by grassroots soccer coaches who graduate from coach education courses, due to their lack of understanding with regards to critically considering knowledge they are taught and how this can be transferred into their own practice (Buysse *et al*., 2003). Findings also highlighted philosophical differences held between coach educators and grassroots coaches, outlining the need for coach educators to provide individual support coaches during their coaching journey to ensure engagement and progression.

A recommendation, therefore, would be to place more emphasis on reflection to further enhance and continually develop grassroots coaching, whilst providing further movement away from the prescriptive past of coach education. A greater focus on the role of reflection would provide the learner with an opportunity to be autonomous in their development, by critically examining their philosophic viewpoints in conjunction with theircoaching behaviours and practices. This would lead to the overcoming of problems and issues associated with their coaching, whether that be their philosophy, practice or their process. Furthermore, opportunities have been presented throughout the thesis highlighting the role grassroots coaches play in young soccer participants lives and therefore the need for The Football Association to retain coaches and provide a support network for their development.

The collective findings of this thesis may provide coaches, coach educators and policy makers involved within grassroots soccer with clearer insights into the support required for those coaching within this setting. Recommendations from this thesis include that coach education provide greater clarity regarding coaching philosophy and the transference of such considerations into practice, along with the role reflection can play in the fostering, applying of philosophical concepts and critical evaluation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATIONS

I wish to thank **Dr Spencer Boyle** who has been the catalyst for the completion of this research project. The confidence you have shown in me since we began working together, alongside your friendship, has enabled this thesis to be completed. I also want to express myappreciation to **Dr Ian Whyte** for his criticality and encouragement, along with the time hetook to explain his comments and help my growth as an academic. I would also like to thankall of the coaches and coach educators who participated within the studies.

I would also like to thank my family, most notably my Mother, **Vivien**, and my Father, **Neil**for their unconditional love and support over the past 30 years. Thank you to **Luna**, my German Shepherd and **Arwen**, my Black Cat, for the early mornings and late nights you spent keeping me company as I looked to progress this thesis. I love you all.

Finally, but by no means least, I wish to express my love and appreciation for my incredible wife, **Laura**. She is my daily inspiration, and the one who supports me most when times get hard. I would not have been able to complete this without you by my side. Thank you for loving me, and for putting up with me, during this PhD journey.

Author Declaration

Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution

D. Hooper

Material submitted for another award

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any othersubmission for an academic award and is solely my own work

Signature of Candidate:

Type of Award **PhD**

Department **Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation**

Word Count: **85,154**

Total Word Count: **107,326**

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

It's mid-2020 and the world is in lock down. A real-life pandemic in our lifetime. A catastrophic crisis of spiritual, physical, emotional and mental proportions. The way the world is viewed, how we act and live our lives has been questioned and disrupted. What webelieve and value, along with how we identify ourselves and behave have had to be adapted,with social distancing and mask-wearing becoming the norm. Our environment has also changed, with working from home the new normal, living within a "bubble" and keeping a distance from work colleagues, friends and family; something I have found incredibly difficult and painful. However, this PhD has been the one constant throughout such worrying and devastating times and has seen the re-writing of this introduction on numerous occasions. Additionally,my interest in gaining an insight into coaches and coach educator's perspectives, in terms of philosophies, behaviours and practices present within grassroots soccer has kept me focused, in what can be considered a complex and messy world; a phrase that can also be applied to sports coaching.

The virus has acted as a stimulus for the world to re-assess their existence; how we act and live as accountable members of society. What is becoming evident day-by-day, is the varying viewpoints each individual takes on how the government is dealing with the pandemic. Indeed, similarities between the present thesis and the pandemic, although in vastly differing contexts, make me smile as I see and feel the value of the presented PhD thesis; six years in the making. I am not sure back then, upon starting the body of work, I would have believed that I would be finalising my submission virtually, questioning whetherI should leave the house or not. Nor, that my PhD would display such synergies between a history-making crisis and how coaches and coach educators view the world.

My own personal beliefs and values have been considered and reflected upon, even more so than normal, in the past six months; however, this isn't necessarily a negative thing.In fact, this process has solidified the impact of the present thesis and also my own development in terms of understanding the values and beliefs I hold dear. COVID-19, also known as "The Coronavirus", has torn apart my own life. I have witnessed the collapse of my business, First Step Lifestyle, the physical challenges of working from home for hours on end, unable to escape a house, full of a loving wife (Laura), a large German shepherd dog (Luna) and a demanding cat (Arwen) and the crippling separation from my dear parents andclose-family. That being said, my own values and beliefs have never been clearer, with empathy for others, a desire to work hard at every opportunity and an ambition to love my family beyond the best of my ability the key to how I perceive my existence in this world.

My own personal viewpoints have been developed through my previous involvements as a hopeful soccer player, as a professional coach and a university lecturer, along with the various relationships I have formed, how I was raised, and the numerous interchanges experienced along the way.

1.1 Authors Personal Biography

One of my own personal values, is education and the role this plays in the development of a person and their future ambitions. I arrived at post-school education as a directionless, lost 18-year-old, who left school with one A level (C in English Language). However, over time,my standpoint on education being a hindrance changed to be a gateway, and Gateshead College provided the guidance I needed to grow as an individual and begin to reach my potential. I now hold a vast array of educational achievements including a (FdSc) FoundationDegree in Sport Coaching, a (BSc) Undergraduate Degree in Sport and Exercise Development with Honours, and a (MBA) Postgraduate Masters Degree in Business Management with Distinction. I have achieved the status of Teaching Fellow from the Higher Education Academy, been Ofsted inspected and peer reviewed, and hold varying coaching qualifications. I am a UEFA B Licence (Level 3) in Soccer Coach, whilst I also hold Association for Physical Education qualifications. My values and beliefs are anchored with pragmatic thoughts and behaviours, coupled with the need for growth and development.

I have developed teaching and coaching experience over a 10-year career, and I have been fortunate to have worked with females, males and disabilities, along with 3-year olds to adults and all in between. I have coached in a variety of environments such as grassroots, primary and secondary school, college, university and professionally. I have been privilegedto have spent time working for The English Football Association (The FA) as both a coach and coach educator. The next part of my career was spent working within UK-based universities as a Lecturer in Sport Coaching. I am currently employed by Northumbria University in the role of Employability Partnerships Adviser. This role is to facilitate the embedding and coordinating of employability and careers education in programmes throughout various faculties within the university. Furthermore, my role is to work in partnership with Faculty colleagues, ensuring consistency across themes, delivering targetedactivity to support Faculty, Department, Subject and Programme Employability Action Plans. I thoroughly enjoy being able to positively impact students by ensuring all learners

have a career plan, improving their career readiness, so they decide, plan and compete as early as possible.

Alongside my university career, I am currently the Managing Director for a coaching consultancy company; The Legacy Partnership. This business supports men with mental health issues by providing an accessible and practical group coaching programme. The aim is to provide men with real life scenario's, ideas, strategies and tips to incorporate into their ownlife to improve their mental health. The idea is to give men the support they need to feel comfortable talking about their mental health - a subject still very much stigmatised. The Legacy Partnership focuses on helping men reset their mindset to release their inner wolf and take their first steps in improving their anxiety and depression. My work de-stigmatisingmen's mental health has led to me being featured within the Internationally renowned Men'sHealth Magazine, BBC Radio and numerous podcasts. My intention was to utilise my experience from the fields of education and coaching to develop a business that would be able to maximise the positive impact it could have on those suffering. I gained traction in my career through my vocal approach to being diagnosed with clinical depression, becomingmorbidly obese and being made redundant. I transformed my life by losing 70lbs, being signed off medication and developing The Legacy Partnership.

My core, personal philosophy has also changed as I have progressed through the varying experiences mentioned, from leaving school with a lack of purpose, to then achieving excellent qualifications, to securing fulfilling jobs with large organisations, to thedebilitating consequences of being clinically depressed, leading to now supporting studentsthrough my university role and men with my mental health work. What an incredible journeyI have been on so far however, contextualising how the present thesis was developed, beganwhen working for The FA as a coach and coach educator back in 2014; pre-PhD, pre- depression, pre-COVID.

1.2 Authors Personal Philosophy

The date is the 30th of June 2014 and I am just about to start my first day as a fulltime coachand coach educator within the governing body of English soccer, The Football Association.A brief overview of my role included mentoring and supporting grassroots coaches and primary school teachers throughout the North East region of England. This involved trainingand education to develop appropriate challenging practices such as differentiation, small-sided games and questioning. Additionally, the role required the delivery of talks at coaching conferences, workshops and CPD events whilst also practically delivering National

Curriculum Physical Education and evening soccer development centre sessions. By this point in my career, I had been fortunate enough to have around 10 years of coaching experience and after spending a great deal of time working voluntarily within grassroots soccer, I saw this as an opportunity to help progress coaches regionally by supporting the development of their own practice. Holding a background of elite soccer as a player within Sunderland AFC, and then years spent delivering coaching sessions at a grassroots level, I was well versed in the requirements needed to undertake a role in soccer coaching. My ownpersonal beliefs had been shaped by the experiences of being a grassroots soccer player, thevastly differing experiences of being an elite soccer player and the experiences I had being coached by, and working alongside, highly qualified and experienced individuals who I aspired to be like.

Before delving into my own beliefs, it is key to outline my own personal philosophy. This is built on a core set of key values consisting of hard-work, discipline, loyalty, honesty, integrity, organisation and ambition. Such values translate into my belief that if you are hardworking and disciplined in what that you do, and if you are loyal, honest and show integrity, whilst being organised and ambitious, you can create a fulfilling life. This is then evidenced in my daily routines and practices such as ensuring structure and productivity runs throughout my day, whilst being honest and loyal, along with displaying integrity wherever there is an opportunity to do so. This has created a practical philosophy that helps me take on daily tasks in a way that I feel is appropriate. Giving consideration to my own coaching and teaching practice, my philosophy has led me to develop a practical style that provides an empowering environment for those I work with as my values are evident in my practice.For example, my sessions are meticulously planned. Throughout my delivery, I look to engage and take an interest in every participant individually. I am honest when giving feedback and ensure that I am passionate and knowledgeable about the subject being delivered, and this was the case in my new role as part of The FA.

I assumed my role would be to make small changes, advise on technical detail where appropriate, and be an overall sounding board for ideas grassroots coaches may like to share with me and then implement. However, within the first few weeks of my new role as a Coach Educator, I observed the archaic practices and attitudes evident within the cluster ofgrassroots clubs I was supporting. Such experiences made me question the current role of coach education within grassroots soccer, along with piquing my curiosity in terms of how coaching philosophy is impacted and transferred into practice. Anecdotally, I found that some coaches were not interested in self/player development and were fixated on the possibility of winning grassroots soccer matches at all costs. In terms of coaching practice, some coaches were often uncomfortable facilitating small-sided games and would prefer to deliver constant practices

which would leave participants standing in queues waiting for theirturn, in the pouring rain and bitter cold.

In terms of my "Ah-ha" moment, that came in the North-East of England, in a freezing December support session. I observed some practice which consisted of minimal ball manipulation, small-sided games or challenges so I decided to engage the coach in conversation. When we spoke of age-appropriate coaching, they displayed knowledge of good practice such as the role of questioning or the benefit of variable/random practice. WhatI could be sure of was that there was a disconnection between theory and practice. This was incontestable. Such experiences informed my coach education delivery, in that, when speaking and working with grassroots coaches we spent more time discussing topics such ascoaching practice and behaviours. I also looked to gain an understanding of what grassrootscoaches valued within their own lives and how this could translate to their coaching practice. After gaining small amounts of success with a group of coaches, I felt that by exploring grassroots coaches' values and beliefs, along with examining their current coaching practice,there may be an opportunity to identify what changes may be required within coach education. If a coach could successfully align their coaching practice with their philosophy through the behaviours displayed, they would be able to support those they are working withmore effectively. In addition, I could create a very worthwhile PhD project with the possibility of achieving a large impact within grassroots soccer coach education.

1.3 Introduction to the thesis

Therefore, the aim of the thesis was to deliver an investigation of an original nature, of philosophical and practical consideration, within grassroots soccer. With this in mind, the study focused on exploring how coaching philosophy was perceived, conceptualised and applied to the coaching behaviours and practices of grassroots soccer coaches. Furthermore,the study focused on examining to what degree philosophy was evidenced within coaching practice. Perspectives from both a coach and coach educator were undertaken.

Coaching philosophy has been portrayed as a core part of coaching practice (Cushion& Jones, 2014); however conflicting research has outlined that coaching philosophy is often opposed by coaches due to a lack of knowledge surrounding the effective, practical implementation (Partington & Cushion, 2019). When giving thought to knowledge, coaches developed their understandings through experiences both in an education setting and through their practice (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003). Three learning categories exist,

including nonformal, formal and informal (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). With this in mind, the present thesis looked to explore coaching philosophy from the perspectives from those out on the field, the grassroots coaches, and from those who are charged with the development of said coaches, the coach educators. The intention of this research was to provide a thoroughoverview of the current conceptions, definitions, ideologies, rhetoric and intentions from those actively working and coaching within grassroots soccer but go beyond the crude descriptive representations that currently exist (Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

Highly institutionalised and structured in a hierarchical manner, coach education programmes take a prominent role in the development of grassroots soccer coaches when considering the formal route of learning (Nelson & Cushion, 2006); alongside the completion of academic degree programmes (Nash, 2003). Coach learning in a nonformal environment is often described as continuous professional development (Cushion *et al.*, 2003), and takes the form of seminars and coaching clinics (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Finally, informal learning is visible through the experiences coaches gain during their life, as a participant, as a coach and through previous interactions (Knowles, Borrie & Telfer,2005).

The purpose of this opening chapter is to introduce key topics that will surface throughout the thesis along with providing context to the study. The introduction will also give an overview of previous scholarly work regarding key elements of the coaching process; coaching philosophy, practice and reflection. This chapter also introduces the research aim and questions that have guided and underpinned this research. Said aims were developed with the goal of structuring the work in a relevant manner whilst providing a framework to the research. The final aim of the first chapter was to outline the focus and content of the subsequent chapters.

1.4 Coaching philosophy and coaching practice

When considering a central statement found in sport coaching books and papers, it is that the role of a coaching philosophy is the informing and enhancing of coaching practice and activities (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009; Jenkins, 2017). To bolster this claim, coaching philosophy has been described as a "comprehensive set of values about coach's behaviour and practice" (Lyle, 2002, p.167). That being so, each coach is an individual and their own personal story is a combination of fragmented experiences, in conjunction with complex

involvements (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004). As outlined, the affect a coaching philosophycan have on both coaching behaviour and practice has begun to become prevalent within sport coaching literature (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Gould, Pierce, Cowburn & Driska, 2017).

When contemplating the role of coaching philosophy in terms of importance, what should be outlined is that a coach does not need to be philosophic in thought or nature to deliver practices or activities (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). Although, previous work has outlinedthat a coaching philosophy is critical to success within coaching (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).The coaching process has been described as a complex process (Jones & Wallace, 2005), but coaches have been found to place higher stature on winning and fun compared to philosophical considerations (Martens, 1996). This suggests that coaches may not contemplate such philosophical developments as high importance, yet their academic colleagues do consider "…a coach's philosophy of great importance" (Camire, Trudel & Forneris, 2012, p.244). An issue to raise is the challenges or limitations currently held by coaches with regards to their understanding of the development process required to progressa coaching philosophy, in terms of structure, practical impacts or even what to include (Cushion & Partington, 2014).

Considerations regarding coaching assumptions (ontology, axiology and ethics) are not a regular occurrence within previous philosophic enquiries (Hardman & Jones, 2013). Previous work has been seen to be more descriptive rather than empirical, and therefore a significant gap is presented in terms of the sport coaching literature's understanding within grassroots soccer coaching practice, and how philosophy is perceived. Furthermore, coachesmay not have been provided with the skillset or understanding required to constructively linkphilosophical concepts and theoretical coaching models to effective coaching practice(Taylor & Garratt, 2010). Therefore, challenges would exist in the competent delivery of evidence-based or philosophically aligned activities. What does not help matters of this aforementioned nature is the varying descriptions surrounding philosophy (Cushion & Partington, 2014), which include terms such as beliefs, principles and priorities (Kidman &Hanrahan, 2011), and values and actions (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010).

When examining previous work, a positivistic approach has been dominant, often simplifying the coaching process and minimalising the process as a whole and, instead, breaking coaching into manageable parts through quantitative approaches (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006). Nevertheless, the role of coaching philosophy has begun to be a more commonly discussed topic within coach education and therefore

practitioners (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). More prominent in terms of terminology and perceived importance, when looking through a critical lens in terms of knowledge surrounding coaching philosophy and the role the consideration plays in the development ofpractice, limited research exists (Partington & Cushion, 2019). Often looked upon as a technician in an unproblematic world (Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour & Hoff, 2000), coaches should be immersed in the research process given the dynamic nature of coaching philosophy and practice (Nash & Collins, 2006).

Rather than developing a new definition for coaches to follow, providing insights into how philosophies are constructed would provide practical value for practitioners whilst enhancing the literature regarding coaching philosophy (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). A philosophically driven approach to coaching would be useful, as practitioners tend to take a 'what works' or 'common-sense' view of coaching, albeit an un-reflexive process (Cushion, 2013). Therefore, to gain clarity around this process would lead to a greater understanding in terms of the perception's grassroots soccer coaches hold in terms of coaching philosophy. Furthermore, how this relates to coaching practice within a grassroots soccer setting and the challenges faced in such a context. To achieve this, the central focus to coaching practice explorations should be to describe what coaches do, intertwined with why coaches do it and how coaches do it (actions) (Abraham & Collins, 1998). With this in mind, the lack of interest from coaches regarding incorporating philosophical principles into their coaching may not be surprising (Nash, Sproule & Horton, 2008), giving more thought to session content, activities and organisation.

Although coaching philosophy has been outlined as a key contributor to effective coaching practice, coach education plays a limited part in terms of engaging coaches in the thorough understanding of a coaching philosophy (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). Therefore, to ensurea comprehensive approach to research was undertaken, the present thesis used concepts of a philosophical nature including axiology, ontology, epistemology and ethics to provide a framework to understand coaches' philosophy, and what this consists of. This research aimsto be clear and supportive in what coaches need to apply philosophically to practice, shapingtheir activities and ensuring their behaviours mirror the needs of their participants.

When examining coaching practice, a number of personal variables and contextual factors shape the delivery (Cushion *et al.*, 2006; Townsend & Cushion, 2015). Previous workhas seen the gaining of understandings of 'what' coaches do and 'how' they do it, leading tothe incorporation of investigations surrounding 'why' it is completed in that way (Jones, 2006). Nevertheless, gaps exist in the body of sport coaching literature in terms of the lack

of understanding regarding how coaches are influenced by the experiences they hold and the perceptions they have developed (Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2003). Although several additional factors contribute to what coaches do in practice (Cope, Partington & Harvey, 2016), a coaching philosophy is viewed as the key underpinning to all coaches' actions (Carless & Douglas, 2011). To effectively discuss coaching philosophy, and avoid the aforementioned pitfalls of previous work, aligning research to philosophical considerationssuch as axiology, ontology, epistemology and ethics facilitate an opportunity to explore deep, meaningful and philosophical questions (Hardman & Jones, 2013). Furthermore, to ensure the presented coaching research displayed realism in the eyes of the practitioner, gaining an understanding to the myriad of constraints, opportunities, values, beliefs and viewpoints of grassroots coaches in conjunction with their practice replicates their everydayexperiences (Cushion, 2007).

What the present thesis offers sport coaching research is an in-depth exploration of philosophy in a context that provides practitioners, researchers and coach educators with an opportunity to gain an understanding that will make a practical difference to the development of coaches practice. Overall, the works intend to simplify coaching philosophy in a clear and simple manner, leading to the usage by others to enhance their own personal practice, whilst making greater sense of their own philosophy (Smith, 2018). This work is empirical and answers the call for more research focusing on coaching philosophy; how it works and influences practice (Cushion & Partington, 2014). The study intends to provide greater clarity, with regards to coaching philosophy, alongside the practical implementation withincoaching delivery. Additionally, how the shaping of practice through a philosophy can aid alignment in terms of coaching behaviours and participant needs (Partington & Cushion, 2019).

Therefore, this research aims to gain an understanding into the relationships between coaching philosophy and coaching practice, with the intention of identifying how the assumptions that underly coaches' behaviours shapes practice. Such work provides an opportunity to be impactful with regards to coach education development, due to an increased understanding in terms of coaching philosophy and the relationship with coachingpractice. Considering the opportunity to gain an understanding in terms of the complexitiesof the combination of philosophy, practice and setting (grassroots soccer), an analysis of the aforementioned would be timely (Cushion & Lyle, 2010). This research appears to be of useto the sport coaching literature and coach education alike, given the potential for illuminating opportunities for development in terms of clarity around coaching philosophy, and practical advancements of implementing coaching behaviours into delivery.

1.5 Context of the research and the research problem

The context for the present thesis was English grassroots soccer. Over 12 million people play grassroots soccer in England (The Football Association, 2019). The sport is governed by The English Football Association (The FA), with administration filtered through regional County FAs. The FA has a variety of key aims and objectives, underpinned by "The National Game Strategy" which outlines the objectives for each of the levels being worked at from participation to elite, consideringall genders and abilities (The Football Association, 2015). In terms of this thesis, the relevantobjectives include Coach Education and Soccer Participation. The National Game Strategy highlighting the ambition of enjoying a 'world-leading education programme for a diverse football workforce', along with a flexible, inclusive and accessible playing opportunities foreveryone (The Football Association, 2015).

The FA works closely with The Premier League, who outline the importance of a clearly defined 'football philosophy' within the Elite Player Performance Plan, or EPPP document (The Premier League, 2011). However, within this document, statements referring to both "playing style" and "value" can be seen leading to confusion around what is considered philosophical considerations. When giving further thought to the EPPP document, since inception, both elite academy soccer and grassroots soccer have aligned their participant's age groupings to three separate phases, including the foundation phase (under 5 to under 12), the youth development phase (under 13 to under 16) and the professional development phase (under 17 to under 21) (The Premier League, 2011). To provide further specificity, the present work focused on those coaching within the 'Foundation Phase'. Their aim was identified as "progressing participants" and developing their "love for the game" (The Premier League, 2011, p. 60).

With such varying phases in terms of age groups outlined, exploring the coaching process at differing levels will provide a more-holistic approach to the sport coaching literature. The coaching process considers not only the coach, but also the context, social factors and interactions (Cushion, 2007) that influence how a coach manages their role, leading to a complex and holistic environment being faced. This environment is specific to the variables the coach is immersed within (level, age range, gender), leading to individualised, multifaceted coaching practice (Gilbert, 2007). The complexity of the coaching process has been understated and belittled, with studies focusing on individual elements rather than the intricacy of coaching practice (Cushion, 2007; Hall, Gray & Sproule, 2016).

Due to such reporting, the sport coaching literature lacks valid representations of the process and the journey coaches undertake when negotiating the chaotic, disorganised actualities of coaching practice. What has resulted is a scarcity of knowledge surrounding how and why coaches deliver their respective practice in certain ways (Cushion, 2007), albeitthis has been developed in recent years (Hall *et al.*, 2016). The benefits of researching suchtopics could include the effective development and improvement of coach education. This could be accompanied by greater opportunities to prepare, support and progress coaches' abilities in negotiating the challenges of the coaching process (Potrac *et al.*, 2000). Such miss-alignment between coaching theory and actual coaching practice mirrors the traditional distance held between those practicing coaching and those researching coaching (Cushion, 2013). Therefore, the subjective experiences of, and contributions to, the complex interplayof the coaching process in foundation phase grassroots soccer remains under researched (Potrac, Nelson & O'Gorman, 2015).

1.6 Research Aim

The aim of this research was to investigate the construction of grassroots soccer coaches' philosophy, the role it plays in practice and how such considerations are perceived by both coaches and coach educators.

1.7 Research questions

The following research questions were devised to give a clear focus to the project:

1. What are grassroots coaches' understandings of coaching philosophy withregards to the shaping of their coaching practice?
2. What coaching behaviours are evident within grassroots soccer coaches'coaching practice?
3. How do Coach Educator's perceive the role of coaching philosophy withingrassroots soccer?
4. What are the similarities and differences between grassroots soccer coaches and grassroots soccer coach educators, regarding their coach philosophies based on their experiences in life and sport?

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis has been organised in a way that produces a story-like feel to the research and moves through the research process chronologically. Following on from the Introduction (Chapter 1), a thorough Overview of Literature (Chapter 2) was undertaken with the ambition of providing a summary of relevant sport coaching literature; including thestrengths and limitations. This chapter looks to discuss coaching philosophy, the coaching process, coaching practice and

reflection to provide a solid theoretical foundation to give context to the present thesis.

The next four chapters are broken down into the various data selection points. Firstly, (Chapter 3), a systematic review was completed to provide a grounding in previouslycompleted work, alongside a clear rationale for undertaking the outlined research. The next chapter (Chapter 4) provides insights into the philosophical underpinnings of grassroots soccer coaches with considerations given to their background, experiences, coaching role, previous relationships, coaching philosophy and various interactions which influence their coaching practice. Next (Chapter 5), provides insights into the practice of grassroots soccer coaches in relation to their coaching philosophy, values, beliefs and coaching behaviours. The following chapter (6) took the viewpoint of coach educators with regards to grassroots soccer coaches values, beliefs and practice activities. Chapter 7 then compared and contrasted the coach educators and grassroots coaches directly. The aim of these chapters is to seamlessly build from one chapter to the next to provide a detailed and practical overview of the coaching process.

The final two chapters, Discussion and Conclusion, pull together the research projectby the providing of the core findings, key contributions to knowledge, theoretical and practical implications for the world of sport coaching, and the propositions for possible future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Overview of Literature

2.1 Introduction

Guided by traditional pedagogy (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Harvey, Cushion & Massa-Gonzalez, 2010), coaching intuition (Cushion et al., 2003), and copying of others (Cushion et al., 2003; Williams & Hodges, 2005; Ford, Yates & Williams, 2010), Partington and Cushion (2013) noted that coaching behaviour and practice can be influenced from the established nature of coaches within sport. Instruction is recognised as the most common behaviour displayed by coaches (e.g. Miller, 1992; Kahan, 1999; Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac, Nelson & O'Gorman, 2007; Ford et al., 2010), with sports such as soccer commonly identified with a prescriptive, coach-led approach to coaching (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Harvey et al., 2010).

Coaching research has displayed a process of coaches asking their participants to master elements of a game (i.e. skills), before then incorporating these elements into game-like activities (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009; Harvey *et al.*, 2010). Although research has noted the messy, chaotic and reactive nature of coaching (Cushion, 2007), coaches have displayed a desire to take a more organised and prescriptive approach. Ford *et al.*, (2010) suggest a definition for such clear separations in their work examining coaching behaviour. "Training form" was outlined as technique and skill-based practices and "playing form" as phases of play, and small-sided/conditioned games (Ford *et al.*, 2010). The researchers found that although coaches highlighted their aspirations for taking on the role of a facilitator andproviding a challenging and thought-provoking environment, more time was spent inpractices associated with "training form", such as skills and coach-led behaviours. Furthermore, the scholars retrospectively interviewed the coaches, finding limited self- awareness and minimal success in terms of achieving their aims due to the activities being practically delivered.

In order to gain further insight into the process of coaching, further empirical research within coaching has been proposed, focusing on coaches and their individualised context (Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002). Furthermore, gaining insights into the thoughts, beliefs, values, interpretations and justifications of how coaches intend to positively direct the participants, would provide a deeper understanding of the knowledge and experiences that guide coaches' actions (Potrac *et al.*, 2002; Smith & Cushion, 2006; Harvey *et al.*, 2010).

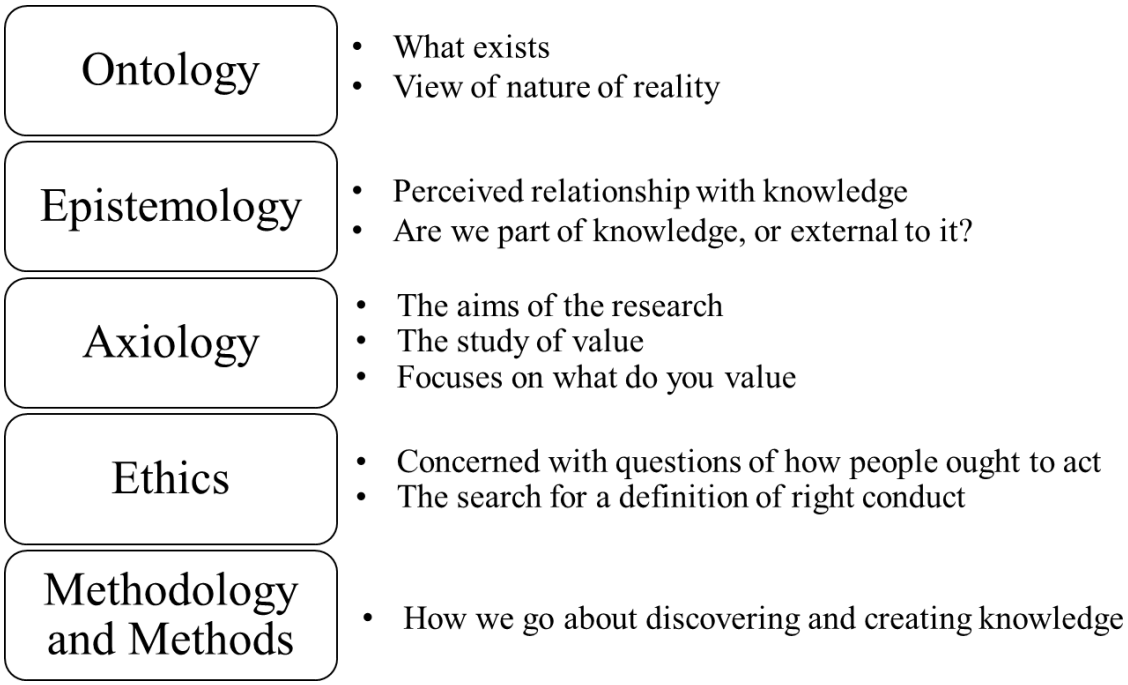
For researchers to gain a considerate, complete and thorough understanding of coaches' behaviour and practice, a mixed-method approach has been advised (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Applying a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches providea rigorous inquiry into coaches' practices, and the behaviours underpinning that practice (Potrac *et al*., 2002; Smith & Cushion, 2006; Ford *et al*., 2010). Although a plethora of information is at hand regarding coaching behaviours in the context of professional soccer (e.g. Partington & Cushion, 2013), practice structures (e.g. Ford *et al*., 2010) and coaching philosophy (e.g. Nash & Sproule, 2011), soccer coaching within a grassroots setting has beenlimited (Potrac *et al.*, 2016).

Taking a mixed-method approach to coaching research presents academics with the opportunity to examine "how" and "why" coaches structure their practice, whilst also gaining insight into the justifications for such behaviour (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Potrac, Jones & Cushion, 2007). This process then facilitates the development of theories that enquire into coaches' practice (Potrac *et al*., 2007). Changing practice and behaviour requires coaches to acknowledge their underlying thoughts regarding coaching (Harvey *at al*., 2010), although research has noted the difficulty in addressing this process due to the low self-awareness held by coaches (Smoll & Smith, 2006; Cushion, 2010). Furthermore, research examining coaching practice, philosophy and behaviour offers an opportunity for practitioners to move out of a safe coaching zone and to challenge their own practice throughan open and honest self-reflection (Harvey *et al.,* 2010). Coaches' practice and behaviour are then supported, developed and extended through peer-reviewed evidence rather than "traditional" pedagogy (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Harvey *et al*., 2010), or the copying of others (Cushion & Partington, 2013), with reflective methods providing a framework to challenge culture and tradition (Potrac *et al*., 2002; Cushion *et al*.,2003). To effectively move forward, coaches must first acknowledge their previous actions and use this inquiry to pragmatically progress.

2.2 Introduction to Pragmatism

Numerous philosophical paradigms exist (E.g. Positivism, Post-Positivism, Constructivism, Interpretivism, Pragmatism), with each encompassing a differing viewpoint on the varying elements of philosophy including axiology, ontology, epistemology, ethics and methodology (See Figure 2.1) (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Figure 2.1 Research Principles



When considering pragmatism as a tool to guide research, an opportunity and fluidityin terms of methodological contemplations is presented. Pragmatism is based on the concept that the problem being investigated should be done through the approach that suits the investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998); with pragmatic researchers incorporating amixed-methods approach on a regular basis (Morgan, 2014). The intention with such an approach is that instead of placing emphasis on the methodological choice, instead, the mainattention is given to the research problem and the consequences of the research (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). That being said, applying a pragmatic stance towards research has been claimed to provide researchers with the opportunity to incorporate the qualities of two different groups, such as quantitative and qualitative (Cresswell, 2013).

Originating from the United States in the 19th century, pragmatism was initially developed by several philosophers, educationalists and professional people (Maxcy,2003). A core group of individuals include philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, psychologistWilliam James, philosopher and mathematician Chauncey Wright, jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and philosopher and lawyer Nicholas St. Johns Green. Additionally, philosopher,educationalist and social reformer John Dewey; philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist George Herbert Mead; and philosopher and political scientist Arthur F. Bentley (Kaushik &Walsh, 2019). From what has been recounted from early discussions developing the notion of pragmatism, the coming together of the aforementioned individuals was through the agreement that effective inquiry can be achieved through an individual method (Maxcy,

2003); and therefore, the group effectively dismissed traditional assumptions regarding the nature of reality, knowledge and inquiry (Biesta, 2010). Pragmatists believe that past experiences directly affect our beliefs and future actions (Maxcy, 2003; Morgan, 2014). Individuals use the results of previous actions to predict the consequences of similar actionsin the future (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). As pragmatists outline that experiences only occur once, beliefs attached to possible outcomes of future actions are provisional (Morgan, 2014).The scholar also notes that as no two people share identical experiences, pragmatism provides a unique opportunity to develop research that is unique to individuals whilst also being shared by many.

Grounded in the view that human experiences construct knowledge based on beliefs and habits (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008), pragmatism focuses on the concept that both singleand multiple realities exist. Imploring empirical inquiry, pragmatic researchers refuse to be drawn into metaphysical contentions surrounding truth and reality (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). Giving further thought to reality, for pragmatists, truth is whatever has stood the scrutiny of individual use over time (Baker & Schaltegger 2015), along with the facilitatingof satisfactory outcomes in terms of experiences (James, 2000). However, this differs from the notion that if the experienced worked, then it is true (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Instead,pragmatism considers the choice of one version of reality over another, leading to considerations governed by how well that choice results in anticipated or desired outcomes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Furthermore, pragmatism, given its practical, problemsolving nature, looks to solve real world problems, rather than theorise leading to the appealfor like-minded researchers (Cresswell & Clark, 2011), and coaches alike.

Examining the underpinnings of pragmatism, epistemologically speaking, experience is the precursor to the development of knowledge (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019); although such knowledge is not considered reality (Rorty, 1980), given the unique experiences and perceptions individuals hold (Morgan, 2014). There are, however, challenges faced by pragmatists such as the focusing on epistemological concepts compared to those of a methodological nature (Morgan, 2007). As epistemology is considered as a philosophical, theory-driven field, practical researchers receive questioning about the focusof this nature, compared to that of research focused on methodology, which connectphilosophical concepts to practical scenarios (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Instead, combiningthe two aforementioned areas provides pragmatists with an opportunity to immerse research in an understanding surrounding our beliefs and the influence they have on research, whilstconnecting the nature of our knowledge to produce practical and impactful developments

(Morgan, 2007). Through the combination of an epistemological and methodologically driven research project, pragmatism facilitates the effective addressing of practical researchquestions (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

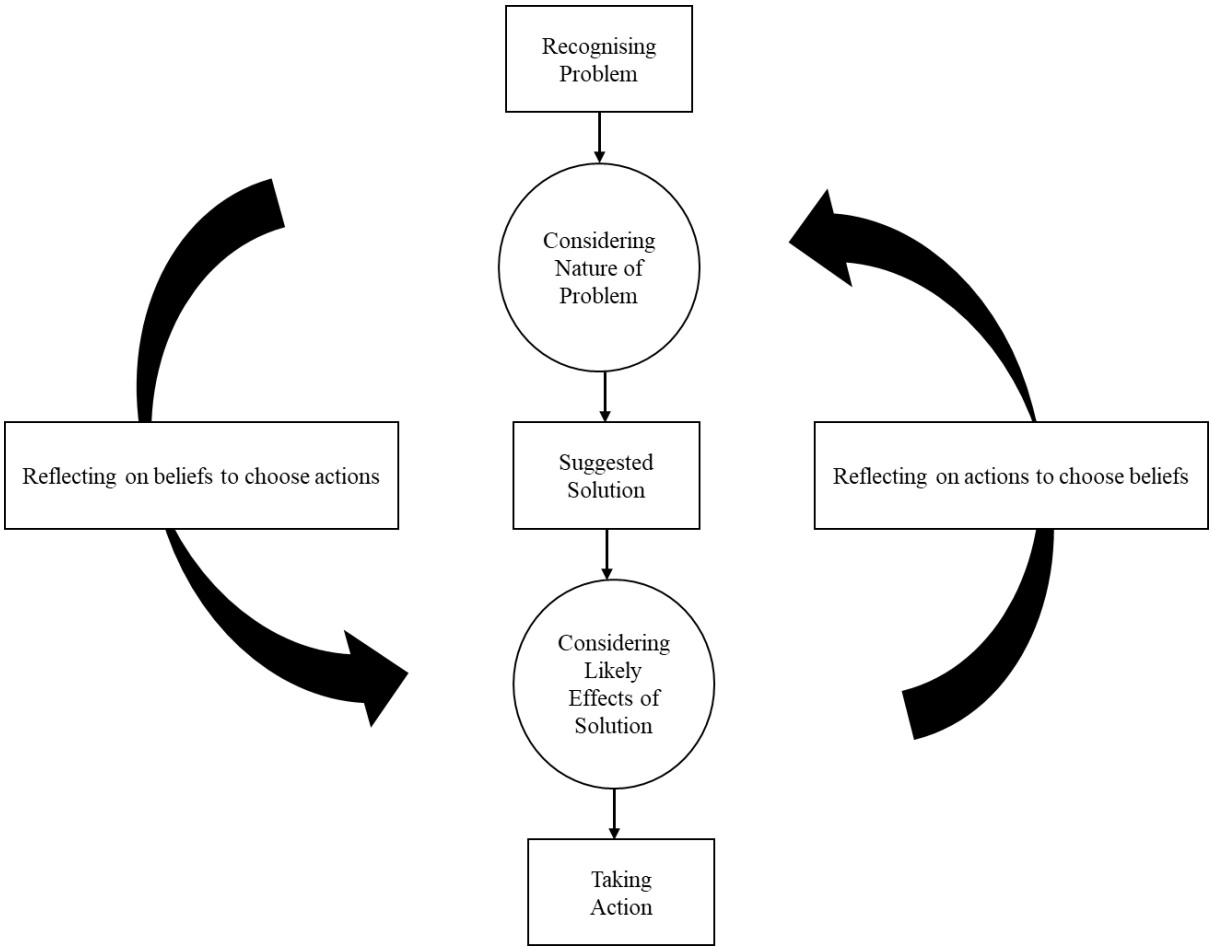
The role of the researcher in the research process must also be acknowledged when undertaking pragmatic studies as the worldview held [by the researcher] can influence the research project, such as selecting the key research questions to be examined and how to undertake this research, methodologically (Morgan, 2007). The scholar notes that these decisions are affected by the personal history of the researcher, their experiences and beliefs. John Dewey, considered one of the founding fathers of pragmatism, suggests through his theory of social inquiry, that research should be natural, situational and grounded inproblems (1910). Dewey also outlines that such inquiries should be both an examination oftheory and practice (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019), combining beliefs and actions. This process leads to the understanding of an element of reality, whilst creating knowledge with the intention of generating change within that part of reality (Dewey, 1938). Creating knowledge that can influence and stimulate positive change is the primary purpose of inquiry (Goldkuhl, 2012). When undertaking a full examination of a research problem, investigations should be undertaken from multiple and varying perspectives to ensure the full range of dimensions are investigated (Dillon, O'Brien, & Heilman, 2000). Being a "pragmatic researcher" allowsthose involved to undertake an independent role, removed from the methods, in other words, researchers enjoy flexibility in terms of the methods they employ (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Combining methods to address research questions can include the employment of qualitative data utilised in-conjunction with quantitative data, for example interviews used alongside observations (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This approach has been outlined as 'what works' and refers to the selection of methodological tools that will help the researcher address the research question, along with the intention for researchers to justify method choice (Maxcy 2003). To practically engage coaches within the process of pragmatism, applying frameworks can be advantageous given the similarities observed in the coaching world.

2.2.1 John Dewey

The Deweyan notions of *inquiry* and *habit* were considered as two frameworks to explore oneself (Dewey, 1910); thus avoiding 'crude' practice (Hall & Gray, 2017). *Habit* refers to previous experiences from which our beliefs have been informed (Morgan, 2014). In a coaching context this could be interpreted as coaches being underpinned by rigid practice therefore failing to critically enquire into such activities; rather they would take the 'tried

and tested' and, therefore, trusted approach. However, *inquiry* is noted as "a robust process beginning when we experience an indeterminate situation that causes us to doubt our knowledge or ability to do something" (Korte & Mercurio, 2017, p. 64). Moreover, Dewey considers this process of doubt to be fundamental in developing a critical mind-set (Dewey, 1933), also terms "disturbance" (See Figure 2.2). Furthermore, *inquiry* is necessary to affirmand challenge our belief system (Levi, 2012). This can be evidenced with regards to coachesin the form of self-questioning, self-critiquing and reflexivity (Hall & Gray, 2017), with a pragmatic coach regularly taking part in experimentation (Cruickshank & Collins, 2017), testing and trialling different options (Schön, 1991).

Figure 2.2 Dewey's Model of Inquiry (Morgan, 2014)



By bringing beliefs and actions into contact with each other, meaningful experiencesare created, with an importance lying with researchers in understanding not only what they do but also why they do it (Morgan, 2014), as reflected in the extant coaching literature (Hall*et al*., 2016). As pragmatism can facilitate rigorous inquiry to inform beliefs, values, decisions, and actions (Korte & Mercurio, 2017) the present thesis looked to take this

approach to research, supporting the coaches' own inquiry into their beliefs and values witha view of improving practice activities. Additionally, Talisse and Aikin, (2008) noted that pragmatism is about making tangible improvements in the everyday lives of people in the world. This could be considered a priority role for foundation phase soccer coaches as theybid to facilitate enjoyment, autonomy and participation of those they coach.

With the shift of social research by pragmatism, researchers must address key questions such as the choices made around the research process and the impact of the choicesthey make. This should be taken through a critical, honest and reflexive process of self- thought, whilst re-defining the research community (Golding, 2015). This process will bring together the experiences and beliefs of coaches and coach educators to further pragmaticallydevelop sport coaching practice by triangulating inquiry and self-reflection from a variety ofviewpoints and assumptions to reorient the sport coaching literature towards a new set of issues and goals (Denzin, 2012). To "make sense" of the research findings a model of reflection can be utilised to guide and frame the work with a view of developing critical reflections skills in coaches who work at introductory or grassroots levels (Schön, 1983).

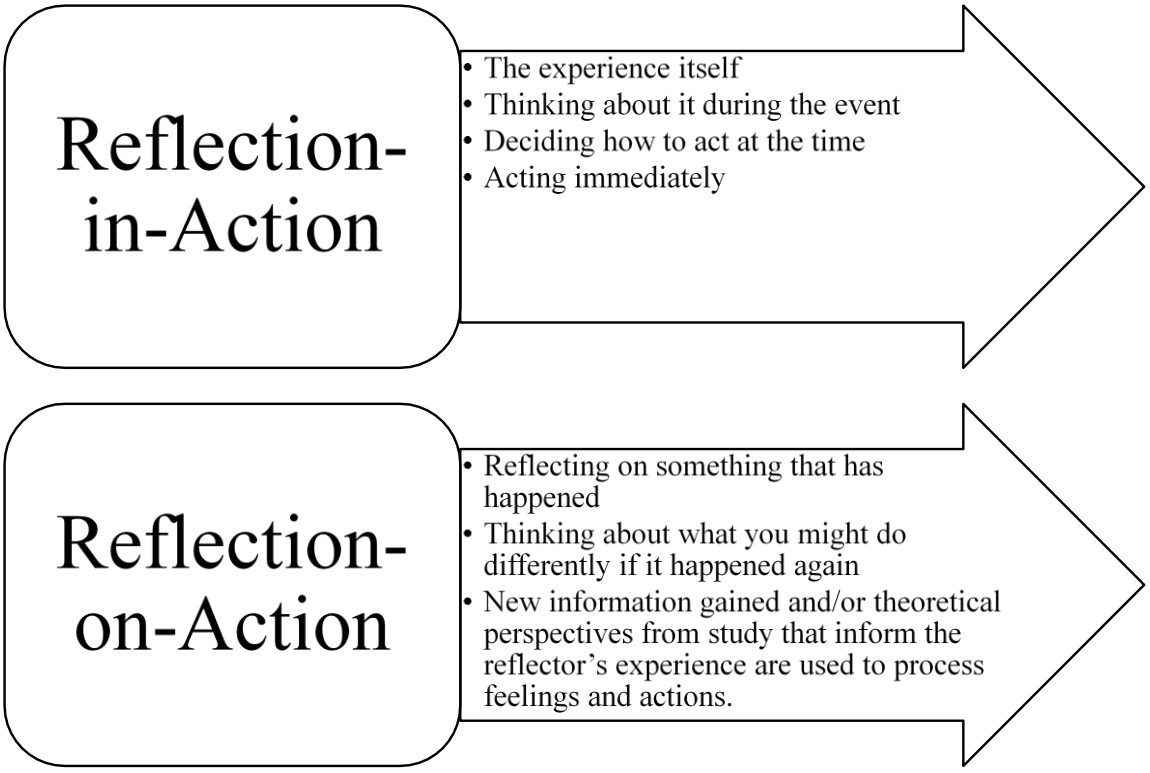
2.2.2 Donald Schön

Although reflection had been discussed in the early 1900's (Dewey, 1933), it was Schön (1983) who coined the notion of "reflective practice". By developing Dewey's concepts, Schön identified two types of reflection, including reflection-on-action (after-event- thinking) and reflection-in-action (thinking while doing) (See Figure 2.3). This process facilitated the learning from experience through gained implicit knowledge (Schön, 1983). Reflection-on-action refers to gaining an insight into developing practice through reviewingand evaluating the performance, whereas reflection-in-action is the process of reflecting as experiences occur through immediate examination and responding to such experiences appropriately (Schön, 1992). Within both scenarios, the role of the reflector is to engage in a process of continuous learning with a view of shaping future actions (Schön, 1983). Schöndifferentiated between the role of a novice practitioner and an expert practitioner. He suggested that a novice lacking tacit knowledge would take a more mechanical approach toreflection; whereas, expert practitioners had the ability of self-monitoring, and would hold the ability to adapt their practice, sometimes instinctively (Finlay, 2008). Inexperienced practitioners, therefore, required thinking time and the opportunity to 'step back' from practice to effectively think experiences through (Schön, 1983).

Although the reflective practice work produced by Schön (1983) has received many plaudits and has been the inspiration for further models of reflection (Gilbert & Trudel,

2001), researchers have criticised Schön's work. Reflection-in-action has been described asnot achievable (Moon, 1999), while others believe that Schön ignored the context of reflection (Boud & Walker, 1998). Furthermore, criticism towards the downplaying of reflection-before-action by Schön has also been highlighted (Greenwood, 1993). The German scholar's work has also been criticised for "lacking a critical dimension", specifically focusing on a lack of challenge (Fitzgerald, 1994). A further criticism surroundsthe oversimplification that is evident throughout Schön's work (Thompson & Thompson, 2008), along with the lack of criticality when discussing the process of reflection (Smyth, 1988). This contrasts to the work of Dewey who highlighted that reflective practice providesthe very framework to challenge beliefs, dogma, doctrine and prescription.

Figure 2.3 Schön's (1992) Model of Reflection in and on action



When considering the different elements of reflective practice, a key element of a pragmatic approach to reflection is the process of calling upon previous experiences, examining how successful those experiences were and how they could then contribute to actions moving forward, helping to form the notion of thinking (Dewey, 1910), underpinningthe reasoning behind framing the research process through a pragmatic lens. However, Schön (1983) does not account for this forethought or planning (Thompson & Pascal, 2012),and instead focuses on the two elements of his work: Reflection-in-action and Reflection-

on-action. A third reflective consideration, referred to as Reflection-for-action, provided the opportunity for nursing practitioners to call upon their experience within the planning stage, pre-empting and developing what was termed forethought (Benner, Hooper-Kyriakidis & Stannard, 1999). This enabled the nurses to anticipate unexpected circumstances; a scenarioall too familiar in the context of sport coaching. The scenario was outlined within Gilbert & Trudel's (2001) study, which they termed *Retrospective Reflection-on-action,* outside of the action present; a phrase the present study will adopt and use moving forward. The researchers' extended Schön's (1983) work by noting that youth sport coaches actively reflect and engage with three forms of reflection including *Reflection-in-action, Reflection- on-action* and *Retrospective Reflection-on-action.* Through taking this three-pronged approach to reflection, findings note that coaches could consider how effective their coaching strategy was along with how efficient their coaching implementation was (Gilbert& Trudel, 2001).

Therefore, coaching literature (Nelson & Cushion, 2006; Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie& Neville, 2001; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Cushion, Ford & Williams, 2012) has highlightedthe importance of critical reflection in terms of coach learning. For example, a novice coach, moulded by coach education courses (e.g. professional knowledge, Schön, 1983) and methods observed, needs to consider how a facilitator approach can fit within their philosophy (Cushion *et al*., 2012). Furthermore, Williams and Hodges (2005) noted that coaches need to integrate new information into their current model to change behaviour; which can be enabled through critical reflection, or more specifically through critical questions, such as 'why do I do this?' (Ghaye, 2001). Such practice help coaches navigate away from the 'swampy lowlands of practice' (Schön, 1983, p. 42) towards "high ground". In other words,combining theory and practice to move forward effectively in a complex environment (Thompson & Pascal, 2012).

Throughout this review several variables have been presented, discussed and critiqued demonstrating the numerous contextual factors, personal characteristics and complex scenarios coaches face on a weekly basis (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). Unlike those coaching in a professional setting, grassroots coaches are likely volunteers (Potrac *et al*., 2015), with limited formal coach education and a professional career in a differing environment (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). Some grassroots coaches place emphasis on winning and others focus on more developmental aspects, such as enjoyment or social skills (Gilbert& Trudel, 2004). Reflective practice can aid in the enhancement of coaches' self-awareness, when considering such ideologies (Cushion, 2016).

In terms of the present thesis, there is a compelling argument (Nelson & Cushion, 2006) that researchers can gain a critical insight into the underpinning knowledge of coaches' philosophy and practice through a framework. This framework, in the form of Schön's (1983, 1987) theory of reflective practice, highlighted critical components in the development of critical reflection. In more recent times, Gilbert and Trudel (2001) have extended this framework, termed the model of experiential learning.

To stimulate and engage coaches within this critical and reflective process, video feedback has been used as stimulated recall, to highlight potential coaching issues or 'triggers' (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). The stable and self-reinforcing element of the model ofreflection in and on action is the role of the coach (frames) (Schön, 1983). These frames influence coach reflections as issues that are aligned to their role frame which will be addressed. Being self-aware and critical of your role frame is critical to growth; a skill somenovice coaches do not hold and with which they may need support (Cushion *et al*., 2012).

To facilitate the recognition of coaches in terms of utilising scientifically outlined coaching methods is regularly called for within the sport coaching literature; known as the theory-practice 'gap' (Cushion, 2007). Schön's (1983) model of reflection provides a framework for coaches to be enabled to do that through the consideration of their reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and retrospectively reflecting-on-action. This work provides an opportunity for coaches to inquire into their practice, with a view of developing a more critical mindset and develop their own learning (Dewey, 1933).

2.3 Coach Learning

Coaches learning takes three forms, including formal, informal and nonformal (Nelson, *et al*., 2006). Coaches engage with a variety of elements with regards to developing their knowledge and understanding of coaching, taking place both in and out ofeducational contexts (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003). These elements encompass structured courses, reading and observing peers along with CPD workshops with research suggesting the influences on learning are a mixture of self-directed (e.g. Gilbert & Trudel, 2001), directed (e.g. Jones *et al.*, 2004), informal (e.g. Nelson & Cushion, 2006), formal (e.g. Irwin, Hanton & Kerwin, 2004) and nonformal (e.g. Schempp, Templeton & Clark, 1999) experiences (Nelson *et al*., 2006).

Due to numerous and contrasting approaches to learning, discrepancies in terminology have been cited in the development of the coach learning literature (Nelson *et al*., 2006), with various terms being interchangeable (e.g. coach education, coach training and coach development). Therefore, this thesis will be utilising the phrase "coach learning"

to ensure consistency; something which has lacked within previous coach education literature (Nelson *et al*., 2006).

2.3.1 Non-Formal Learning

With learning taking place in a variety of contexts, nonformal learning refers to the daily experiences and environments a person is exposed to, in which they develop skills, insightsand stances (Nelson *et al*., 2006). Most learning takes place in this context (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999); with specific coach learning being seen in the form of coaching interactions (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001), coach mentoring (e.g. Nash, 2003) and coachingexperience (e.g. Cushion *et al*., 2003). Further sources of informal learning take place through the reading of books, magazines and manuals (Schempp *et al*., 1999; Irwin *et al*., 2004) along with searching the internet and observing video sessions on platforms such as YouTube or through social media sites such as Twitter (Wright, Trudel & Culver, 2007). Additionally, research indicates that coaches place a high proportion of value towards havingthe opportunity to hear expert coaches speak on various topics, whilst such forms of development occur at a relatively low cost and are readily accessible (Reade, Rodger & Spriggs, 2008).

An example of nonformal learning is that of mentoring, although it should be noted that this form of support can be both formal and informal (Nash, 2003). Benefits such as thehighly contextual and active collaboration between mentor and mentee, often in the environment of the mentee (Cushion, 2006), allow for the building of trust and rapport, resulting in learning and development. With formal coach education criticised for the passiveand decontextualised approach to coach support, insitu mentoring provides a contrasting landscape. Coaches have highlighted the context-specific feedback and guidance provided as a benefit of working closely with a skilled educator (Wright *et al*., 2007). It is important to note, that limitations do exist with regards to the mentor process, most notably if the rolesand expectations for either party (e.g. mentor/mentee) are not clearly defined and met (Nash,2003). However, a mentor can effectively support and encourage coach growth through stimulating reflective discussion (Cushion, 2006).

2.3.2 Formal Learning

A further learning format coaches are subjected to is that of a formal nature, such as withinan educational setting (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974); for example, a coach education course (Irwin *et al*., 2004), organised by national governing bodies (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). However, criticisms have been aimed at this type of learning with courses regularly deliveredover short periods of time leaving few opportunities for coaches to integrate their new

knowledge practically, whilst being facilitated by an experienced educator (Knowles *et al.*, 2001). Further, coaches' complete courses with limited pedagogical understanding of their role in the coaching process (Cassidy, Jones & Portrac, 2009); along with a minimal awareness of the critical and reflective thinking skills required for coach development (Nash& Sproule, 2009). When giving thought to coach education, there is a focus on what coachesshould be able to do upon leaving the course, rather than what they should know (Miles, 2001). Coaches depart courses with a certification but also a misunderstanding of coaching,as the coach education process is generally mechanistic and standardised (Lyle, 2002; Mallet, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009); due to the coaching 'toolbox' which is provided withinthe course setting (Cushion *et al*., 2003). To engage coaches, bespoke courses must be delivered, rather than taking a one size fits all model (Navin & Vinson, 2020).

Further reservations regarding this formal approach to learning is the assumption that coaching knowledge can be passed from one coach to another without misunderstanding (Nelson *et al*., 2006); with limited clarity regarding whether coaches hold the understandingto apply knowledge in the correct scenarios, along with why and how to apply it (Nelson *etal*., 2006). Nevertheless, there are numerous benefits of such learning experiences including networking with coaches following a similar learning journey (Nash & Sproule, 2011), andthe attainment of a formal qualification (Cushion *et al*., 2003). However, issues have been raised regarding the quality assurance around the delivery of courses, as coach educators have tended to follow the outlined programme in a relaxed manner (Hammond & Perry, 2005).

Further criticisms of coach education courses have discussed the role of peer-to-peer coaching with limited contextual transfers available for coaches to take when they return to their focused coaching setting (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Coaches working with junior participants will be faced with almost unrecognisable issues and scenarios when they deliver sessions to their coaching peers within a course setting, leading the sessions to mirror a very different context (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Being provided with an opportunity to coach and receive feedback should be admired, however the transfer may be minimal given the varying contexts (Nelson *et al*., 2006). Finally, the pedagogical content, that is coaching knowledge, requires greater focus (Jones, 2007), whilst Nash and Sproule (2012) question the preparation courses give coaches, with regards to the realities of the disorganised, chaoticlandscape of coaching sessions.

The role of formal learning from coaches' perspectives seems to be a needs-must rather than an active strive for knowledge (Nash & Sproule, 2012), as coaches see the process

of gaining qualifications as mandatory and a box that must be ticked (Piggott, 2012). Whilst some coaches consider the progress through qualifications as key milestones for development, others, once meeting the criterion required to complete the course, return to their day-to-day coaching environment and continue to coach in the same manner as they did prior to attending the course (Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010). Such means of learning (formal) is viewed in a diminished way compared to more informal and nonformalopportunities by sports coaches (Mallet & Dickens, 2009).

2.3.3 Informal Learning

Informal learning consists of activities that consist of educational experiences outside the "framework of the formal system" (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8); that is, seminars, conferences or workshops focusing on a particular topic or subgroup (e.g. grassrootscoaches) (Nelson *et al*., 2006). Considering the role of learning, developmental time is relatively low with regards to formal and nonformal learning (Gilbert, Côté & Mallett, 2006),with these forms outlined as not particularly impactful (Nelson *et al*., 2006). Instead, sourcesof informal learning such as observations with others, discussions with peers, internet and social media searching along with reading articles, magazines, books and journals are moreimpactful, powerful and more regularly used for learning and development purposes (Cushion, Nelson, Armour, Lyle, Jones, Sandford & O'Callaghan, 2010).

Contemplating the role of informal learning, coaches tend to utilise the method of self-development when looking to overcome issues within practice supplemented by three components of self-reflection (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). These include reflection-on-action, reflecting-in-action and retrospectively reflection-on-action. Although reflection will be discussed in greater depth later in the chapter, such reflections are with a view of gaining further insights into technical and practical coaching issues (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). It has been noted that informal learning experiences are commonly seen in the forms of communities of practice, mentoring and reflection (Nelson *et al*., 2006).

Such informal learning provides coaches with a framework to understand varying points of view, develop empathy and use the experiences to guide their future actions, most notably in the forms of being mentored and observing others (Jones *et al*., 2004). Although learning usually begins by being a participant in the sport at a younger age, early experiencesof sport lay the foundation for coaches' values and beliefs, as is the case within education (e.g. student to teacher) (Loughran, 2008). However, such informal learning experiences arealso associated with limitations such as the acceptance of a traditional, 'folk' pedagogy (Cushion & Partington, 2014) and the delivering of sessions with limited critical reflection

(Cushion, 2016). Reflection plays a vital role within coach development, as coaches practical experiences will shape thoughts and future actions (Erickson, Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). Reflection can be stimulated through effective interactions, leading to the development of practice (Irwin *et al*., 2004); communities of practice (Culver & Trudel, 2008) and reflective practice (Carson, 2008).

To conclude, when giving thought to how coaches learn and develop, three sources of formal, nonformal and informal learning are blended together. Coaches can also developtheir practice and coaching understanding through their ever-developing values, beliefs and reflections (Cushion, 2016). Trial and error tends to be a method used to refine coaching principles, rather than a more efficient, informed self-reflective approach (Irwin *et al*., 2004).

2.4 Considerations within Sports Coaching

2.4.1 Reflective Practice

Reflection plays an important role in the development of critical self-awareness (Gilbourne, Marshall & Knowles, 2013); being a mechanism which can facilitate the evolution and improvements of sport coaches (Gilbourne *et al*., 2013). When considering if coaches philosophy does not align with their practice, change may be required for coaches to do this effectively (Partington & Cushion, 2014). A suggested method to articulate change has been reflection (Cushion *et al*., 2012); although such practice should not be considered as simplya process undertaken superficially and occasionally (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Instead, reflection should address coaches' beliefs and behaviours whilst occurring continuously (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Critical reflection can support change (Cushion *et al*., 2012), with coaches considering and questioning how their beliefs, values, and practices contributeto what they are doing, and why they are doing it (Knowles *et al*., 2001). Although studies have highlighted how coach learning can be developed through reflection (Gilbert & Trudel,2001; Nelson & Cushion, 2006), changing the behaviours of coaches requires a more criticalapproach (Cushion *et al*., 2012). Seen as an essential part of coach learning (Cushion, 2016),the role of reflective practice has been highlighted as a criterion for an effective coach (Côté& Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013), whilst also implying coach expertise (Nash & Sproule, 2011). Even so, Cushion (2016, p. 2) highlights that "reflection and reflective practice are 'taken-for-granted' in coaching", with practitioners failing to apply the rigor required for critical contemplation. Nevertheless, research demonstrates the positive role inthe development of coaches through reflection regarding their practical coaching experience(Gilbert & Trudel, 2001).

A theory of learning from experience (Nelson & Cushion, 2006), reflective practicehas come to light in a variety of professional practices. For example, studies have explored nursing (e.g. Taylor, 2006), education (e.g. Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004), social work (Thompson & Thompson, 2008) and sport coaching (e.g. Partington, Cushion, Cope & Harvey, 2015); with the intention of providing professionals with the opportunity to 'make sense' of the work being undertaken (Ghaye, 2000). Finlay (2008) notes that reflective practice is the process of examining practice and learning new insights through critically evaluating performance and being self-aware to develop future practice. However, the researcher also alludes to the contention regarding reflective practice due to its 'time- consuming' nature (Finlay, 2008). This often leads to superficial reflections which do not progress practice, and instead leads practitioners in the direction of averageness (Cushion, 2016).

The sporting world across all levels has become a very professionalised environment, with coaches in smart tracksuits, wide ranges of equipment to utilise and expectations from the individuals they work with to uphold (Gilbourne *et al*., 2013). This professionalisation has also led to a great interest within the sport coaching community of the role of reflection and reflective practice (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2005; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Literature has previously acknowledged the ad hoc nature of coach development (Knowles *et al*., 2001), not only through coach education programmes but also through literature, internet sources and colleagues. When considering coach education programmes, a common acknowledgement is the limited amount of contact time and the prolonged time between courses (Knowles *et al*., 2001), highlighting the importance of effective reflective practice within sports coaching.

When considering the origins of reflective practice, pragmatist John Dewey can be considered the founding father of reflective practice. In Dewey's (1933) work, the scholar outlined that reflection started from doubt, which prompted inquiry, leading to the possible resolution of the encountered problem. Dewey (1933) also noted that such critical consideration was the catalyst for practitioners moving away from the normal routine of "thinking the problem out" through trial and error; effectively learning from doing. Initially developed through the work of Dewey (1933), it was Schön (1983) who made strides in the field of critical reflection, although further examples of reflective models exist (e.g. Kolb, 1984). In education, Larrivee (2000) outlined that should a teacher be unwilling to participatein critical reflection, they will be forever trapped in mediocracy and, instead, should look to synergise values and beliefs and their practice. Similarly, in the health sector, nurses are

expected to reflect on their performance with a view of acting on such reflections in order to develop practice (McKay, 2008). Considering a sporting context, Abraham and Collins (1998) highlighted the more effective ability to apply knowledge held by coaches, the morechance of overcoming problems. Within their study of 19 inexperienced coaches Carson (2008) found that reflection improved strengths and weaknesses in performance; whilst Cushion *et al*., (2012) highlighted that reflections can make more informed judgements in amore meaningful way to improve practice. Furthermore, within Nash and Sproule's (2015) work examining an expert coach and a novice coach, the researchers note that more effective(expert) coaches construct knowledge by asking questions and challenging norms. However,novice coaches mimic perceived good coaching and accept practice with limited challenge.This can be seen within formal coach education courses, due to the limited time available, most of the learning is undertaken practically (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999).

For learning to occur the process of actively engaging in reflection must take place, with Gilbert and Trudel (2006, p. 114) outlining that "ten years of coaching without reflection is simply one year of coaching repeated ten times." Schön's activities note that reflection surrounds the encountering of problems during practice and the forthcoming stimulation to consider solutions to said problem. The researcher outlined, as previously highlighted within the chapter *Introduction*, two core elements including reflection-in- action, that is thinking on your feet and reflection-on-action occurring post activity.

Numerous studies in various fields have examined reflection such as teaching (Gibbs, 1988), nursing (Johns, 1994) and sport coaching (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). The use of reflection has been noted as good practice in the role of developing sport coaches (Cushion,2016), however there is minimal evidence to suggest reflection is regularly undertaken at a grassroots level. Furthermore, the role of reflection and its prominence, or lack of, within coach education courses has been noted as insufficient (Knowles *et al*., 2001; Knowles *et al*., 2005). The aforementioned researchers note that reflective skills should not be assumedby coach educators simply by the introduction of the topic hidden within coaching courses.Such an approach to reflection may lead to coaches who do reflect, doing so superficially, with Knowles *et al*., (2005) outlining that in examined National Governing Body (NGB) qualifications, no discussions regarding reflection, values or beliefs was undertaken. With aview of refocusing such conversations to include the combination of philosophical developments and the practical coaching skills of sports coaches, it is useful to note that Nelson and Cushion (2006) highlighted the link between coaches 'role frame', a coaches own approach to coaching andto that of their 'coaching philosophy'. Additionally, Cassidy *et al*., (2009) highlight the similarities between the development of a coaching philosophy and the role of reflection upon coaching practice.

The importance of the role of reflection has been highlighted within numerous studies, for example both Gilbert and Trudel (2004) and Nelson and Cushion (2006) noted that all coach education programmes should look to include reflective practiceof some-sort.

However, the role in developing practice through reflection should not be underestimated, as such a process facilitates the changing of practice cultures (Cushion *et al*., 2012). As coaching consists of action driven by thought (Partington *et al.,* 2015), coachesneed to make meaningful, critical judgements on their practice instead of accepting superficial reflections (Partington *et al.,* 2015). When considering ways of supporting coaches with critical reflection, learning through observation has been suggested as effectiveway of reinforcing and promoting reflections (Partington *et al.,* 2015). However, research outlines that observation can promote the interpretation of an 'ideological' nature (Cushion*et al*., 2012) and Abraham and Collins (1998) note that coaches may be presented with a "gold standard" of coaching to mimic in the case of coach education. Therefore, a tool which supports critical coaching reflections is that of video-based feedback (Partington *et al*., 2015). Research notes that by synthesising recorded video clips of a coach delivering practically with reflective conversation, the coach being worked with is more likely to critically examine their knowledge, reasoning for actions and self-awareness, leading to theopportunity to change the coaching behaviours displayed by the practitioner (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Schön, 1983; Trudel, Gilbert, & Tochon, 2001). This deeper reflective process provides a framework for developing new concepts of practice leading to coaches implementing new 'theories' (meaning and knowledge) in their action (practice) (Harvey *etal*., 2010; Potrac *et al*., 2002; Carson, 2008; Trudel *et al*., 2001).

When looking to provide an overview of reflective practice, Thompson and Pascal (2012) highlight that the concept facilitates a link between theory and practice with the coaches able to turn observations into actionable opportunities for improvements; a notion first generated by Dewey (1910) who noted that such a method was a "dialectical process".Dewey (1910) also highlighted that an inquiring, open mind-set to practice would facilitatecritical, reflective thoughts with the coach analysing and questioning, in detail, elements of their practice (Carson, 2008). However, should coaches be accepting of their observations, they will be guided by an uncritical inertia, rather than challenging current practices, routines, habits and beliefs (Cushion *et al*., 2012). Although, challenges do exist when discussing the role critical reflection plays in the development of coaches and participants.

Within a grassroots youth soccer setting, coaches may coach individually, with no Assistant coach. This could lead to a lack of accountability, due to being unchallenged in their practiceand potentially unengaged in reflection (Cushion *et al*., 2012); with similar findings evidentwithin education (Larrivee, 2000).

To make meaningful judgements and take a critical stance upon reflection, coaches can engage with various tools that facilitate evaluation (Partington *et al*., 2015). An examination of the thought processes considering the reasoning behind each decision and action provides coaches with the opportunity to raise their self-awareness. Reflecting in sucha critical manner, leads to a change in their coaching behaviour (Partington & Cushion, 2013;Schön, 1983). With a view of outlining effective ways to develop coach education, reflectivepractice is beneficial (Knowles *et al*., 2005). However, for long term changes to coaching practice, reflections need to focus on deep, personal considerations surrounding philosophical components, such as coaches' values and beliefs. Such an inquiry would facilitate the enhanced levels of self-awareness, leading to more effective coaches (Schon, 1983).

When considering the role of reflective practice, numerous sectors and fields adopt such practices to enhance their practice such as nursing (e.g. Mahendiran, 2021), teaching (Loughran, 2002) and social work (Knott & Scragg, 2016). When giving thought to effective enhancement of practice, there is a need for individuals to develop an understanding about how they go about their work and why they go about their work in that way (Loughran, 2002). Furthermore, this leads to the enlarging of a field's knowledge base, which, leads to the refinement and progressions of practitioner's abilities regarding their effectiveness and professionalism. Across many professions (e.g. science, nursing, medicine, law, teaching and sport), reflection is emerging as a suggested way of helping practitioners better understand what they know and do as they develop their knowledge of practice through reconsidering what they learn in practical scenarios (Loughran, 2002).

Nursing

When considering continuous professional development within the field of nursing, reflective practice has been highlighted as a key and influential concept in terms of a fundamental learning tool (Bladon & Bladon, 2019; Eaton, 2016). For professionals within nursing, the role of reflective practice has been discussed as important in the identification of feelings, performance evaluations and development experiences (Oelofsen, 2012). There is, however, some contrasting views in terms of when and how reflection should be completed by those in nursing. For example, Nicol and Dosser (2016) has advocated for those in medical fields to undertake reflective practice in a formal, critical, and focused manner. However,

Bladon and Bladon, (2019) discuss the benefits associated to taking a more informal approach to reflective practice through incorporating more explorative and interpretative thoughts in a relaxed environment. As a whole, however, the aim of nurse practitioners should be to become self-aware, self-directing and in touch with their environment (Bladon & Bladon, 2019). The use of reflective practice can aid in the understanding of certain, challenging situations leading to the improving of provisions and overall patient care (Oelofsen, 2012).

Teaching

The role of reflective practice within education has been advocated as greatly impacting teachers' professional development, and aids teacher's awareness regarding the key challenges that they must confront (Loughran, 2002). However, one challenged faced by teachers is the level of reflection undertaken. Research notes that teachers tend to examine surface level concerns such as what works, rather than the value of the activities as an objective itself (Larrivee, 2008). Furthermore, one of the key criticisms of the role of reflective practice within education is the focusing on individual elements of teaching such as identity, lesson planning or individual behaviours (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021). Similarly, various concepts look to engage teachers in reflective practice through the answering of questions relating to their profession (e.g. Borton, 1970). However, by trying to divorce professional and personal identities the educators are unconsciously looking to find areas to "fix", rather than developing opportunities to have a greater positive impact (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021). Only when teachers begin to look deeper, taking a more critical approach, will they begin to gain awareness regarding the moral and ethical consequences of their practice (Larrivee, 2008). Those who achieve effective reflection can been to draw focus towards their practice, issues of equity, social justice, and equality, whilst also acknowledging that practices must be thoroughly embedding in the wider context of education and society (Larrivee, 2008).

Social work

Literature denotes that reflective practice sits at the very core of a social worker's competence and confidence (Knott & Scragg, 2016). Furthermore, the role reflective practice plays is vital in terms of both enhanced learning, self-awareness and personal development which can be seen within day-to-day work along with courses and qualifications (Ruch, 2002). The role of reflective practice has been fully embraced by those within the field of social work as the framework mirrors the daily challenges and considerations faced and undertaken by those professionally operating within the sector. Ruch (2002) outlines such examples including '…the uniqueness of each situation encountered, the extraordinary complexity of human functioning whether in relation to individual personalities, family dynamics or inter-

professional relations and, perhaps most pertinently, the anxiety invoked in practitioners by the work they do' (p. 202). To expand, undertaking such practices enables social work practitioners with the ability to integrate and inform new understandings of their own perspective leading to enhanced self-awareness (Moon, 1999). Furthermore, combining emotional awareness with intellectual understanding facilitates the coordination of feelings, thoughts and actions in a constant process. Barriers surrounding our professional and personal individualities are broken down leading to a great understanding of the contribution our personal knowledge plays in our understanding of our professional practice. Such awareness leads to proactivity regarding the impact of our professional experiences on our personal wellbeing (Moon, 1999).

Inter-relationships between fields

Reflective practice has emerged as an influential concept across a range of sectors including sport, nursing, teaching, social work, law and medicine. Similar challenges exist at a multi-sector level with practitioners and scholars alike working through obstacles to improve practice within their respective fields (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). For example, similar challenges exist with regards to the depth of reflective practice completed with authors nothing that practitioners pause for thought 'from time to time', rather than critically analyse, link to underlying professional knowledge nor plan new, progressive actions (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). The aforementioned industries (sport, nursing, teaching and social work) all face the challenge of balancing technical rationality, and therefore becoming robotic technicians, with their ambitions of being artists who navigate the professional complexities that they face daily (Schön, 1983).

When considering the role of Reflective Practice, there is a common link between the professions discussed in that reflection is utilised as an effective tool to support the development of craft knowledge through experiential learning. Nursing, Education and Coaching are professions which are heavy in 'professional' knowledge but require practitioners to be able to apply this professional knowledge in real-world settings, and thus by doing the job and reflecting on the experiences of doing the job, practitioners can further develop their 'craft' knowledge. Therefore, Reflective practice has a specific role to play in coach development given the similarities between the varying industries.

2.4.2 Philosophy within Coaching

The term "philosophy" refers to a world view approach and can be seen within everyday lifeand in the world of coaching (Hardman & Jones, 2013). Philosophy has origins dating backto circa 3000_{BC}, whilst also being considered as the first academic discipline (Hardman & Jones, 2013). The researchers note that the term *love of wisdom* refers to philosophy and hasbeen guided by

distinctive figures including Socrates and Descartes. When beginning to make connections to coaching, on a daily basis coaches will face questions regarding core philosophical considerations such as experience, meaning, values and ethics. Philosophical reflection has been outlined as a core aid to help guide coaches towards a rationale behind what they are doing and how to justify this to others (Drewe, 2000).

A coaching philosophy provides a framework for coaches' actions (Collins, Gould, Lauer & Yongchul, 2009); with their values underpinning the philosophy (Camire, *et al*., 2012), leading to the behaviour and actions displayed (Carless & Douglas, 2011). Such actions, or coaching behaviours, have been described as "folk pedagogies" (Bruner, 1999), referring to anecdotal approaches passed informally from experienced coaches to their novice colleagues. This method is justified through the agreed understanding that the approach "works" (Cushion, 2013). It should be noted, however, that coaches may have an understanding of what they have ambitions of doing, in terms of their coaching practice, however they do not always follow such plans (Harvey, Cushion, Cope & Muir, 2013; Partington & Cushion, 2013). Therefore, even a meticulously developed and considered philosophy may not always be evidenced within practice (McCallister, Blinde & Weiss, 2000). Given that a coaches' early experiences and learning moments may have been informal, practices and behaviours may have become deep-rooted (Nash & Collins, 2006); and with such experiences being developed and further embedded over time, coaches do notlook to undertake deep, reflexive contemplation as their practice 'works' (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Therefore, a critique of the coaching philosophy literature is that enquiries have not ventured into what sport coaches' do in practice (Jenkins, 2010).

A key factor is the philosophy that coaches hold in terms of contributing factors considered when coaching (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Lyle, 2002). To further highlight the importance of coaching philosophy, gaining a clearer picture of the philosophy held by coaches will provide greater insights into their coaching behaviour (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Jenkins, 2010; Jones *et al*., 2004; Lyle, 2002; McCallister *et al*., 2000). Although highlightedas an important part of coaches daily 'to-do-list', in fact, coaches tend to hold superficial assumptions about their philosophy, and instead do not rigorously engage in the development of a coaching philosophy (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). This leads to coaches missing out on the thorough development and reflective nature of a coaching philosophy, which, in turn, leadsto coaches missing out on opportunities to refine their practice (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Jenkins,2010). Instead, coaches submit ideologies based on the outcomes of their coaching such as tactical considerations (Cordes, Lamb & Lames, 2012) or the enjoyment associated with thetraining regime (Cassidy, 2010). Cushion and Partington (2014) highlight that coaches do not need to

think philosophically in order to coach, which coaches seem to be more concerned with, and there also seems to be minimal effort or desire from coaches to think philosophically (Partington & Cushion, 2013). It would seem the additional tasks of behaviour management, session content and the management of the session hold greater importance than the philosophic underpinnings behind the coaching (Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008). Coaching with limited 'big picture' philosophical foundations or regular reflective considerations (Cushion *et al*., 2003) leads to coaches being informed, informally,by traditional pedagogy along with utililsing practices they perceived to be of value(Cushion, 2013), in other words coaching is not theoretically driven.

Before discussing how coaching philosophy partakes in the development of coaching practice, it is key to address an issue that is recognised within the body of literature focusedon coaching philosophy (Cushion & Partington, 2014). There is a disjointedness associatedwith the definition and conceptualisation of a coaching philosophy (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Such misalignment of a coaches' coaching philosophy (Hardman & Jones, 2013), andtaking a 'folk pedagogical' approach displays the seemingly minimal research examining acoaches' philosophy and the effect this has on practice (Cushion & Partington, 2014).

Such articulations have led to philosophies being used to represent ideologies whichin turn has led to minimal academic sense of philosophy or philosophic enquiry (Cushion & Partington, 2014). For example, Voight and Carroll (2006) provided a rhetorical rather thana critical examination of coaching philosophy within the aforementioned study. Focusing on American Football, the study was focused not on philosophy but an ideology of what the coaches' 'vision' was. This has led to coaches considering their coaching philosophy to be mirrored in their coaching practice that are anecdotal in nature; also described as taking the approach of "what works" and what "gets results" (Cushion, 2013). Consequently, this does little to enhance or make sense of the actions that underpin coaches' actions (Grant, 2007). In contrast, in the work of Gilbert and Trudel (2000; 2001; 2004), the researchers took a longitudinal approach (e.g. 2 years, Gilbert & Trudel, 2004), whilst providing a more complete overview of coaching philosophy through additional methodologies (Interviews combined with systemic observation and stimulated recall). Further limitations of the body of work include fictional narratives (Carless & Douglas, 2011), along with single data extraction points with no coaching observations to support the qualitative discussions (Schempp, McCullick, Busch, Webster & Mason, 2006; Nash *et al*., 2008; Camire *et al*., 2012).

When providing parameters for the present thesis, a coaching philosophy guides coaching practice and compromises of values, beliefs and opinions (Nash *et al*., 2008; Jenkins,

2010). Within a coaching philosophy, meaningful thought processes and actions regarding coaches' values (axiology), morality (values), meaning (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and experience (phenomenology) provide a framework for direction, knowledge, practice and reflection (Hardman & Jones, 2013; Cushion & Partington, 2014; Cassidy *et al*., 2009). An understanding of values and beliefs, along with an understanding of priorities and knowledge (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Nash *et al*., 2008), will support thedelivering of coaching practice believed to be most appropriate for the group they are workingwith (Cassidy *et al*., 2009), but also the most effective for the group they are working with (Cassidy *et al*., 2009).

When considering key elements of discussion around philosophy, further findings within the qualitative body of research noted that coaches at high school level discussed the importance of developing life skills (e.g. Gould, Collins, Lauer & Chung, 2007) which was also emphasized within Camire *et al,*'s (2012) work. Whereas Cordes *et al*., (2012)discussed how the participant's (coaches) philosophy informed their strategic match day plans. Similarly, Cushion and Jones (2014), focused on the professional soccer context, found thatcoaches' practice was burdened with ideological considerations rather than taking critical philosophical deliberations to underpin their practice. Nash *et al*., (2008) highlight that coaches who develop clear values, include a coaching philosophy within their practice alongwith reflecting upon their key responsibilities as a coach will provide a better framework forthe meeting of the participant needs.

Given that coaching has been described as a 'complex' process (Cassidy *et al*., 2009), with Cushion and Jones (2014) noting that practice is often 'improvisatory'; a coaching philosophy should consist of thorough 'conscious' activity and reflection (Cushion & Partington, 2014) rather than becoming routine (Cushion & Jones, 2014). However, coach education has been criticised (Cushion, 2013) for failing to provide coaches with a meaningful understanding of how to reflect effectively and to use these reflections to inform their practice; leaving coaches to beuncritical in their thoughts (Cushion & Partington, 2014). This leaves coach education providers unchallenged in the ideas that are taught (Jones, Edwards & Filho, 2014).Therefore, researchers intend to support the connection of a coaches' intentions with their practice through a mixed-method approach; examining where the coach has been on their coaching journey (biography), what the coach does practically (coaching behaviours) and what the coach does upon completion of their practical delivery (reflection). Interviews combined with systematic observations have been outlined as one way of providing a rigorous approach to research to achieve effective enquiry (Potrac *et al*., 2000). In addition,should coaches take a more critical, reflective approach to philosophical thinking, they would find greater rationale for their actions (Drewe, 2000); whilst being provided with a detailed, holistic understanding

of coaching their own coaching practice (Hardman & Jones,2013).

Due to the way the theory of coaching has outlined approaches to practice compared to their practitioner cousins (Cushion & Partington, 2014), a chasm exists between the two disciplines. More specifically, it is clear that research examining the role of coachesphilosophy could be extended and develop further (Cushion & Partington, 2014). One method that has been suggested is the employment of a qualitative approach, commonly in the form of interviews, to allow the understanding of coaching researchers to develop due tothe personal approach of the method (Nash & Sproule, 2011). However, there are limitationsof taking this approach as results only provide an insight into the coaches' philosophy at that moment in time. As a philosophy is always evolving due to the new experiences, these experiences are taken on board as new knowledge (Jenkins, 2010), rather than as a result of reflection. Furthermore, past studies (Schempp *et al*., 2006; Nash *et al*., 2008) have taken asingle method approach to gaining an understanding into a coaches' practice, however this has neglected what the coach may actually do through practical demonstrations (Jenkins, 2010).

An area of focus within the sport coaching academic community that has not received particular attention is those working at a grassroots or foundational level. As the majority of coaches will begin their own coaching journey from here, gaining a greater understanding as to how the role of philosophy plays in the development of grassroots coaches would be beneficial. Within this environment, the needs of the participants should be deeply considered. Hardman and Jones (2013) outline that considerations regarding tactical and technical considerations should be kept to a minimum within this context (grassroots). Instead, the advancement of the person should be the focus through the development of intrinsic enjoyment of sport. This can be facilitated by coaches in the form of helping the participant'sfall in love with the game and develop a passion to play.

Taking such an approach gives the impression that winning at this level has minimal importance and somewhat aligns with the appropriate 'player-orientated' coaching literature (Ford *et al*., 2010). An academic bias exists within the sport coaching literature in terms of working across soccer, with researchers tending to favour the professional setting (O'Gorman, 2016). What this has left is an apparent neglect of soccer within youth and grassroots settings. The importance of this context has been highlighted in terms of the rolegrassroots contexts play in introducing participants to the game. A vehicle in which health can be improved, friendships can be developed, and community cohesion can be seen, grassroots soccer is also often the benefactor of political and public policy (Gorman, 2016). Overall, the effective supporting and developing of positive learning experiences for younger participants remains

the key role of grassroots soccer and those who are coaching within this setting. Conflicts exists within this age group in terms of the philosophical standpoints of coaches. An example of conflicting coaching philosophy can be seen below:

> A coach of an under seven grassroots soccer team has seven participants they can startthe game with and three to make up the substitutes. Within the squad of 10, a rangeof abilities are present, and this impacts the strength of the team playing in the match.The coach will be faced with the dilemma of knowing that although equal playing time will aid the development of each of the individuals in the squad, it will also mean losing games that, with a strong team, they could win. The constant wondering whether the coach is doing the right thing can lead to self-doubt, criticism and the departure of the coach from the team.

Consequently, as there are minimal studies examining the philosophical underpinnings of coaching practice within grassroots soccer, the understanding of coachingphilosophy and practice will remain deficient. To begin to address the limitations, one of theroles of the sport coaching researcher is to investigate the coaches' biographies, along with what the coaches' have done and with whom. Furthermore, gaining an insight into the knowledge of the coaches (what the coaches knows), their practice activities and coaching behaviours (what they do) and their critical reflections (why they do what they do), will enable the association of their outlined coaching intentions to their practical behaviours and activities. These intentions meet the requirements as called for by sport coaching researchers,as outlined by Lyle (2007), who noted the need to gain a better understanding regardinga coaches' intentions generally, along with why and how they implement such intentions practically.

2.4.3 Coaching Practice

In terms of developing an understanding of the coaching process, there is a need to gain further insight into coaching practice. The findings will provide a framework for such developments (Cushion *et al.,* 2012), due to the opportunity to further understand coaches' qualities, which may be similar or distinctively different depending on the coaching context(e.g. working within elite versus grassroots) (Cushion, 2007). Coaches' roles are underpinned by their ability to help improve the participants with whom they are working (Ford *et al*., 2010), yet within the learning environment they provide (Partington & Cushion,2013). Coaches must be adaptable in terms of their activities and behaviours due to the ever-changing nature of the coaching environment (Jones, 2009). Furthermore, Brewer and Jones(2002) note that exploring coaching practice provides a more meaningful understanding of what coaches do; providing a structure to evaluating how and why a coach delivers a practicein terms of their effectiveness and their philosophical alignment.

With regards to the coaching role; session and environment management, feedback,

correction and instruction have been identified as 'typical' behaviours (Kahan, 1999). Elements of coaching practice vary due to the context being worked in and the individual coaching decisions made, in terms of the duration and timings of behaviours (Hall *et al*., 2016; Potrac *et al*., 2007). Due to the context-specific nature of coaching (Potrac *et al*., 2000), generalisingfindings and ensuring effective transfer from one environment to another would be inappropriate (Harvey *et al*., 2010). Coaching practice includes a range of variables such as relationships, perceptions and sensitivities (implicit) along with language and tools (explicit) (Cushion, 2007). Additional variables include the unpredictable and complex nature of coaching (Jones, 2009), supplemented with the balancing act of stakeholder relationships, time-commitment and administrative tasks, along with the growing expectancy for coachesto be professional (Potrac *et al*., 2015).

The behaviours found within previous research (Ford *et al*., 2010) support the suggestion that coaches prefer a more prescriptive approach to coaching. However, Hall *et al*., (2016) found that within Scottish elite female rugby union, most of the time was spent in playing form activities. Within English elite male soccer, Cushion and Jones (2001) foundthat instructional behaviours were a common coaching strategy, as was the use of praise andsilence. Within other sports (e.g. Canadian wrestlers and figure skaters, Deakin and Starkes,1998; English cricket participants, Low, Williams, McRobert & Ford, 2013), participants spent less time in relevant activities, with Ford *et al*., (2010) emphasising the need for coaches to provide a stimulating environment to aid participant development. Furthermore,coaches may deliver sessions in a way that seems acceptable to key stakeholders (e.g. othercoaches, parents), which facilitates the passing down of traditional, potentially unscientific methods (e.g. folk pedagogy, Harvey *et al*., 2013).

A traditional or 'folk' pedagogy has been mooted as a common behaviour within youth coaching (Cushion, 2013), although taking a game-centred approach will facilitate learning more effectively over the long term (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Indeed, such traditional methods stand at opposing ends to the facilitator role that has been suggested to be most beneficial to player development (Law, Côté & Ericsson, 2007). The challenge remains for coaches to support implicit learning by being silent, to allow participants to learnfor themselves (Smith & Cushion, 2006), along with taking a less prescriptive approach to the development of skills (Ford *et al*., 2010).

With regards to the focus of this present study, grassroots participants should be '…exposed to playing form activities' (Ford *et al*., 2010, p. 492), to develop the required links to be efficient within a match environment. Findings note that, specifically in soccer,

instruction was the most commonly used trait (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford *et al*., 2010). Furthermore, in terms of research findings regarding coaching practice, O'Conner, Larkingand Williams (2017) noted that although best practice has been discussed in depth (Cushion*et al*., 2012; Harvey *et al*., 2010), a direct or coach-centred approached is favoured by practitioners (Cushion *et al*., 2012). Furthermore, such conflicting best practice is evidencedby Chambers and Vickers (2006), who indicate that questioning promotes problem solving. A positive learning environment has also been associated within regular praise (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2002). Hall *et al*., (2016) discuss that such outcomes are not priorities within some approaches such as 'The Game Sense' approach. This is where focus is on developing performances that are competitively successful (Low *et al*., 2013), which contrast with the findings of existing coaching practice research (Harvey & Jarrett, 2014). Coaches tend to utilise behaviours such as instruction as a preference compared to questioning (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford *et al*., 2010; Partington & Cushion, 2013), whichwas found within Ford *et al.,*'s (2010) study in terms of Playing Form and Training Form, respectively. However, Partington *et al*., (2015) outline that coaches have minimal awareness of their coaching behaviours; with further research outlining that coaches are notaware of how often they use behaviours or even what they use (Harvey *et al*., 2013).

To improve, coaches are required to think critically about their practice (Partington *et al*., 2015), and provide engaging activities for participants to participate in (Côté, Baker & Abernethy, 2007). Considering such engaging activities, Ford *et al*., (2010) note that coaches in soccer deliver 'part-practice' activities which involved a structured, unopposed and prescriptive approach to coaching. As somewhat of a contradiction, the work of Williams and Ward (2007) found that delivering more 'match-like' activities provides stimulation in terms of perceptual-cognitive functions along with motor skills. Furthermore, Williams & Hodges (2005) noted that dangers exist for coaches taking a prescriptive approach with participants,at one point or another, being exposed to environments when they must perform autonomously (matches). They should, therefore, be coached in a manner that reflects this (e.g. limited instruction, maximum problem solving) (Ford *et al*., 2010). In order to optimise learning, coaches can set constraints and adapt small-sided games (Vickery, Dascombe, Duffield, Kellet & Portus, 2013; Low *et al*., 2013).

The importance of replicating game scenarios within practice activities has been found as 'essential' for developing the skills needed for effective match play development (Ford *et al*., 2010). This can be replicated through the use of small-sided or conditioned games (e.g. Owen, Twist & Ford, 2004), as found in the empirical works being displayed across multiple sports such as cricket (e.g. Low *et al*., 2013), wrestling (Hodges & Stark, 2006) and gymnastics

(Law *et al*., 2007). Giving consideration to the nature of practice activities associated within the context of the present study, it has been reported within soccer that those who are professional in Belgium noted that match play activities were the most engaging (Helsen, Starkes & Hodges, 1998). It has also been noted that those playing soccer within the UK at elite level are more frequently engaged in such practice activities than recreational participants (Ward, Hodges, Starkes & Williams, 2007). Such practice forms should provide a framework of transfer from training to match day and to enable suchtransfer coaches should coach in a way that is relevant to the game (Ford *et al*., 2010).

A previous view on more-traditional coaching activities was the build-up of competency through a structured 'drill-type' approach which allowed participants to experience high levels of repetition, feedback and instruction. This facilitated participants with an access to skills in chunks, before building up to opposed practices and game-based activities over time (Williams & Hodges, 2005). However, such a structured environment can create an "…overload of information for learners, preventing them from engaging in theproblem-solving process" (Ford *et al*., 2010, p. 485). Furthermore, this approach (prescriptive) has been found to provide information that is easily forgotten along with participants receiving information overload (Hodges & Franks, 2004), with a more player- led approach advocated (Ford *et al*., 2010). As seems to be the reoccurring theme within soccer (e.g. O'Conner *et al*., 2017; Ford *et al*., 2010), previous research undertaken over 15years ago (Cushion & Jones, 2001) also noted that coaches tended to deploy an instructionalapproach. These archaic findings give the impression that coaching within soccer may not have moved forward in the same way research has in terms of appropriate coaching style, highlighting the practitioner-scholarship gap.

Further research with a focus on coaching practice would facilitate the developmentof greater understanding of the effective implementation of a coaching philosophy, which, in turn, would provide a more holistic understanding of coaching (Partington & Cushion, 2014; Hall *et al*., 2016). Although due to the lacking of a 'critical tradition' (Cushion *et al*.,2003), soccer coaches may be reluctant and therefore less likely to change such established(prescriptive) practice (Partington *et al*., 2015), and instead continue to deliver 'tried andtested' models (Cushion *et al*., 2012; Potrac *et al*., 2007).

The present study aims to contribute to the extant literature already available within coaching practice by investigating soccer, and more specifically from within grassroots coaches working within the Foundation Phase; which, unexpectedly, is scarce within the current body of work (Cope, Partington & Harvey, 2016; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Kahan, 1999). Although studies have examined professional youth academy coaches (e.g. Partington

et al., 2015) and participation youth coaches (e.g. O'Connor *et al*., 2017), to the author's knowledge, no research has examined coaches working with 5-11 year olds in a grassroots soccer context. Furthermore, Potrac *et al* (2015) highlighted the dearth of research with a participation soccer (grassroots) focus as surprising. Furthermore, as such roles remain voluntary, support is required to ensure the delivery of excellent experiences to those they work with is achieved, given the high participation rates of grassroots soccer (Lusted &Gorman, 2010). Additionally, the researcher's highlight that there is scrutiny associated withsuch roles, along with the professional practices and standards expected, coupled with the workloads (time commitment, administration, planning etc.) (Green & Houlihan, 2006). Knowing so little about the experiences, viewpoints and practices of grassroots soccer coaches and how "…their experiences might impact their decisions to continue theirrespective participation as coaches" (Potrac *et al*., 2015, p. 2) highlight a gap within the extant literature that would be useful to address, leading to a more 'complete' body of work.

When considering additional contributions surrounding sport coaching practice, a number of frameworks should be considered when considering the role coaching philosophy has on behaviours and practice such as the Epistemological Chain, Transformational Leadership behaviours and Constraints-led coaching and Game Sense approaches.

Epistemological Chain

When giving thought to sport coaching, what should be acknowledged is the complexity faced by coaches in a continuously adjusting environment, compared to simply a knowledge transfer from coach to participant (Grecic & Collins, 2013). Something that provides a roadmap for coaches to enable successful passage through such a complex situation is a personal philosophy (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010). Coaches can frame their actions against certain values, leading to enlightenment (Grecic & Collins, 2013). The epistemological chain, referring to an internal, logical decision-making framework, can facilitate coaches planning, reflection and review process (Grecic & Collins, 2013). For context, epistemology is the philosophical component focused on the nature of knowledge, as eloquently described by Grecic and Collins (2013):

> Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge. It is concerned with answering the questions of what knowledge is, how is it acquired, and how do we know what we know (or conversely know what we do not know). (page 152).

As previously described within the chapter, epistemology are beliefs are composed of an individual's views about the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is acquired (Kaartinen-Koutaniemi & LindblomYlänne, 2008). With this in mind, the epistemological chain, the interrelated decisions derived from high-level personal beliefs about knowledge (Grecic &

Collins, 2013), provides a unique process to gain an understanding of a coaches deep and meaningful thought process.

Giving thought to coaches' future direction, utilising the epistemological chain as a tool to facilitate reflection enables a coach to explore their knowledge and learning to then change their future behaviour (Martindale & Collins, 2005; Grecic & Collins, 2013). Research has highlighted that through engaging with the epistemological chain coaches can take a leap of faith and being to carve a new path outlined by their own beliefs and personal philosophy (Grecic & Collins, 2013). Research has noted that effective engagement with the epistemological chain can be a powerful tool to effectively develop expertise (Grecic & Collins, 2012). Such processes replicate the claim that coaches should always have a clear attitude for continual improvement and a "growth mindset" (Dweck, 2004; Grecic & Collins, 2012). For coaching to progress, developing an understanding and interest in the process in understanding the how and why coaches do what they do is a cornerstone to conceptual development (Cushion, 2007). That being said, to take the role of epistemological chain further, could be the incorporation of awareness of key development experiences they require to improve (Grecic & Street, 2019).

Transformational Leadership behaviours

When considering the varying roles of a coach, one of the key roles is effective leadership. One example of leadership theory is that of 'Transformational Leadership'. Transformational leadership is the process in which leaders encourage, inspire, and motivate employees to innovate and create change. This is completed by virtue of the strong emotional attachment with his or her followers combined with the collective commitment to a higher moral cause (Diaz-Saenz, 2011). One element of transformational leadership which displays similarities to the sports coaching world is the encouragement that employees would question old assumptions (Geijsel, Sleegers, Stoel & Kruger, 2009). When giving consideration such criticality, when incorporating transformation leadership behaviours leaders engage their employees regarding reflective considerations on their daily practice, with further discussions regarding key feedback surrounding their philosophical assumptions (Diaz-Saenz, 2011). Research surrounding transformational leadership has highlighted that those leaders incorporating such practices develop employees who hold more commitment towards professional development (Ross & Grey, 2006), overall reflection practice (Geijsel et al., 2009) and the overall growth of the organisation (Lam, 2002).

When giving further consideration to transformation leadership, one area of emergence is the role individuals values and beliefs play when in the position of 'leader' (Krishnan, 2001). Research has outlined that an individual's behaviours are aligned to their

core beliefs (Russell, 2000), leading to said leader being influenced in terms of their thoughts and behaviours (Tickle, Brownlee & Nailon, 2005). Scholars therefore outline that by gaining an understanding of core values and beliefs that inform transformational leaderships can be further enhanced within training and education (Tickle et al, 2005; Krishnan, 2001). When considering sport coaching, enabling and facilitating an environment where participants feel comfortable making errors to enable learning (Coad & Berry, 1998), placing considerable emphasis on development (Bass, 1997). Transformational leadership has numerous similarities to that of the sport coaching world including a focus on personal and professional development, self-directed leading and self-stimulation (Sarros & Santora, 2001).

Constraints-led coaching and Game Sense approaches

For the last 25 years, sport coaching researchers have tried to gain an understanding regarding approaches to further understand coaching practice. Game-centred pedagogical practices including Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), Game Sense (Thorpe 2005), Sport Education (Siedentop, 2002), Play Practice (Launder and Pilz 2012), Games Concept Approach (Tan, Wright, McNeill, Fry & Tan 2002) and the Tactical Games Approach favoured by some North American pedagogues (Mitchell, Oslin & Griffin 2012) have all contributed to the ever-growing sport coaching body of work. However, one of the frameworks that has facilitated understanding include constraints-based coaching (Renshaw, Davids, Newcombe & Roberts, 2019. This approach has helped to inform the way that many coaches seek to understand performance, learning design and the development of expertise and talent in sport (Renshaw et al., 2019).

When giving though to the context of this thesis, soccer, the most common approaches visible in the sport include constraint led approaches (CLA), Games Sense and TGfU. There are varying differences between the approaches such as TGfU, which tends to focus on the learner, compared to CLA which is centred on the relationships that emerges between interactions (of individuals and their environment) (Renshaw et al., 2019). Furthermore, the learner-environment created is self-organising in nature, leading to learning under the multitude of interacting constraints (Chow, 2013). When considering the role of Game Sense, initially developed in the mid-1990s (Evans, 2006), the approach was a shift in terms of perspective surrounding the way in which skills, knowledge and understanding are constructed (Pill, Penney & Swabey, 2012). The Game Sense approach places focuses on the coach "as an educator". Within this newly defined role, it is the coaches' task to engage those being worked with through questioning. This is undertaking with the intention of connecting participants to meaning and purpose of activities and to encourage them to participate in discussion about the tactical aspects of the game (Evans & Light, 2008). Differences are visible between TGfU and

Game sense, given that the former was created to enhance the learning of secondary physical education pupils (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), whereas Game Sense is based on the training format of sports (e.g., a format of warm-up, game, questions and discussions about the game, skill practice if required, further questions and discussion, extension of game) (Pill, 2013; Webb & Thompson, 2000).

Although varying differences are visible when compared CLA, TGfU and Game sense, it can be agreed that such approaches have challenged the traditional directive sport-as-techniques approach (Jones, 2006). From this work, participants can now be found in more supportive and engaging environments with enhanced opportunities to learn and develop.

2.5 Philosophical Paradigm

2.5.1 Ontology and Epistemology in Sport Research

Research is approached dependent on an individual's view of the world (Žukauskas, Vveinhardt, & Andriukaitien˙e, 2018). A paradigm is a worldview of the nature of the world, underpinned by a set of basic beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The experiences we encounteras researchers shape these beliefs and govern future experiences, filter-like (Cushion, 2013). Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). When undertaking research, the philosophical underpinnings, including the epistemological and ontological standpoints that are guiding the direction of the study, must be considered as such assumptions will impinge and influence the findings of the research (Hammond, 2017). Moreover, the lack of philosophic enquiry has been criticised within the sport coaching literature (Cushion & Partington, 2016). Although Hardman and Jones (2013) do acknowledge philosophical thinking in their theoretical work, however limited empirical work remains in the field (Hall *et al*., 2016). Therefore, prior to beginning the journey of exploration, it is vital that researchers engage with, and consider, the theoretical concepts that support how academics investigate topics and research questions. As our viewpoints areunderpinned by the positioning of epistemology and ontology, an early task for researchersis to be clear on such foundations early in the research process (See Table. 2.1).

Ontology is the philosophical field focusing on the nature of reality, and the different entities and categories within reality (Smith, 2012). With concern to ontological positions, scholars can a stance from the position of realism, idealism or materialism, however objectivism and subjectivism are two widely accepted positions in the context of the present thesis (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Objectivism refers to social beings being considered as separate from our consciousness such as observable facts (Smith & Smoll, 2014). The second

position, subjectivism, relates to the role social interactions play in the construction of social reality such as interpretations of culture and society (Smith & Smoll, 2014). As the doctrine outlines that knowledge is merely subjective and that there is no external or objective truth mirrors the stance of pragmatism. Furthermore, pragmatism is a paradigm that claims to bridge the gap between the objective and the more naturalistic subjective approaches (Creswell 2013).

Table 2.1 Overview of Research Paradigms

Paradigm / Fundamental Beliefs	**Positivism** ***(Naïve Realism)***	**Post-positivism (Critical Realism)**	**Pragmatism**	**Interpretivism (Constructivism)**
Ontology ***The positions of thenature of reality*** *What is reality?*	There is a single realityor truth. External, objective and independent of social actors.	Objective. Realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence, and interpreted through social conditioning.	Reality is constantly re- negotiated, debated, interpreted. View chosen to best achieve an answer to theresearch question.	There is no single reality ortruth. Reality is created by individuals in groups. Socially constructed, subjective.
Epistemology ***The view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge*** *How can I know reality?*	Reality can be measured and hence the focus is on reliable and valid tools to obtain answers.	Realities and knowledge are both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society.	The best method is the methodthat solves the problem. Finding out is the means, change is the underlying aim.	Reality needs to be interpreted. Used to discover the underlying meaning of events and activities.
Axiology ***The role of values in research and the researcher's stance*** *What are my*	The researcher is independent of the dataand maintains and objective stance.	The researcher is biasedby world views, cultural experiences and upbringing.	Values play a large role ininterpreting the results; the researcher adopts both objective and subjective viewpoints.	The researcher is part of what is being researched and cannot be separated, therefore is subjective.

values and beliefs?				
Theoretical Perspective *Which approach do youuse to know something?*	Positivism	Marxism Feminism	Deweyan pragmatism Research through design	Interpretivism (reality needsto be interpreted). Phenomenology Critical Enquiry

Methodology *How do you go aboutfinding out?*	Experimental research Survey research	Critical Discourse Analysis Ethnography Ideology	Mixed Methods Design based researchAction research	Ethnography Grounded Theory IPA
Method *What techniques do youuse to find out?*	Quantitative e.g. statistical analysis, questionnaires	Qualitative e.g. Ideological review Open Ended Interviews, focus groups, observations, journals/diaries .	A mixture of qualitative and quantitative research e.g. interview with systematic observations.	Qualitative e.g. interviews, observations, case study, narrative, life history, journal/diaries.

The next consideration for researchers, concerns epistemology. Epistemology is the philosophical field concerning knowledge and how to reach it (Bakhurst, 2020). Epistemology is specifically concerned with determining what 'counts' as evidence or knowledge within academic research. Broadly speaking, three epistemological positions can be taken by academics, spreading across the research paradigm including: positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

When considering a positivist epistemology, researchers highlight that independent of our knowledge the world exists, with derivable facts being available to develop our knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Such an epistemological position considers knowledge as consisting of measurable truths, which cannot be influenced by the researcher's values or subjectivities. In terms of ontological positioning, this epistemology aligns with objectivism, and is commonly implemented within disciplines such as sport science (biomechanics, physiology) or natural science (chemistry, physics). A contrasting epistemological framework is that of interpretivism. An interpretivist position outlines the need for researchers to understand the various meanings of social actions. Forinterpretivist's, knowledge is derived from the meanings social actors attach to social phenomena. This epistemological position aligns with a subjective ontological position as these philosophical elements look to gain an insight into the social constructions of reality with a view of deriving knowledge through qualitative methods (Camire *et al.*, 2012). A third epistemological positions is that of pragmatism. Appearing to bridge the gap between both positivism and interpretivism, pragmatists see the truth as being the driving force behind our knowledge understanding which is gained through critical inquiry upon our previous actions (Dewey, 1933). In terms of the paradigmatic standpoint, pragmatism sits within a dialectic stance. This position takes the view that all paradigms can contribute to answering the research questions, indeed that numerous paradigms within a single study maylead to a greater understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Therefore, to justify the stance outlined, pragmatism has the potential to closely engage and empower those actively out on the grass, such as grassroots coaches. Furthermore, as pragmatism focuses on the practical considerations, rather than theoretical ones, this framework provides a unique opportunity to provide practical and real-life evidence for impactful developments within coach education.

2.5.2 Quantitative, Qualitative and 'Mixed-Method' Approaches

When considering the methodologies that are broadly used within sport coaching research, two positions are highlighted regularly: quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The

previously theoretical analysis undertaken systematically, of the methods applied to a field of study, are accepted as separate entities when considering their epistemological and ontological standpoints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). There is value in underlining such background information concerning the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the aforementioned research methodology as the present study engages with strategies from both ends of the research methods continuum; namely semi-structured interviews and systematic observations. A justification for the 'mixing of methods' is discussed later in the chapter.

To continue with the provision of information surrounding quantitative research, such approaches are typically those that follow a positivist epistemology. The protocol for undertaking quantitative research follows a theoretical perspective with the purpose of producing hypotheses that can then be tested. Quantitative researchers have a belief in objectivity; that research findings that hold existence that is free from social actors (Brannen, 2017). Taking a positivist approach to research, quantitative academics look to seek whether findings can be considered as true or false. Such an approach is considered deductive, or hypothetico-deductive; that is to say, through theoretical understanding a hypothesis is deduced which is then tested through a structured methodology (Brannen, 2017).

At the opposite end of the methodological paradigm is a qualitative methodology. This approach uses the viewpoint of the social actor to see the world and how they interpret their social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A common association between qualitative data and the findings is that the data is deep, rich and insightful (Austin & Sutton, 2014). When considering the epistemological standpoint of qualitative researchers, the approach advocated is that of interpretivism. Researchers who follow this approach to research are ontologically constructivist; believing that rather than being able to view the world objectively, social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social factors. Typically presented as opposite to quantitative methodology qualitative researchers predominantly emphasise an inductive method, where theory is the outcome of the research findings. Therefore, the observations and findings of research are generalised to conceptualise theory. However, there is also a way of analysing qualitative data using deductive reasoning in which e.g. a theory can be tested (Austin & Sutton, 2014).

A third option for researcher is a mixed-method approach. The "mixing" of quantitative and qualitative data within a single investigation or sustained program of inquiry, refers to an emergent methodology of research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This methodology provides a framework for understanding contradictions and disagreements

between quantitative and qualitative stance. Furthermore, the approach is grounded in reflecting participant point of view, whilst ensuring the findings are immersed in the participant experience (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Considering that the present study has incorporated methods that are traditionally kept separate, it is appropriate to provide a rationale and justification for taking a 'mixed-method' approach. As time has progress, more recently literature has begun to implement a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, with numerous authors highlighting the benefit of using a 'mixed-method' approach (Brannen, 2017).

2.5.3 Justification for a Mixed-Methodological Approach

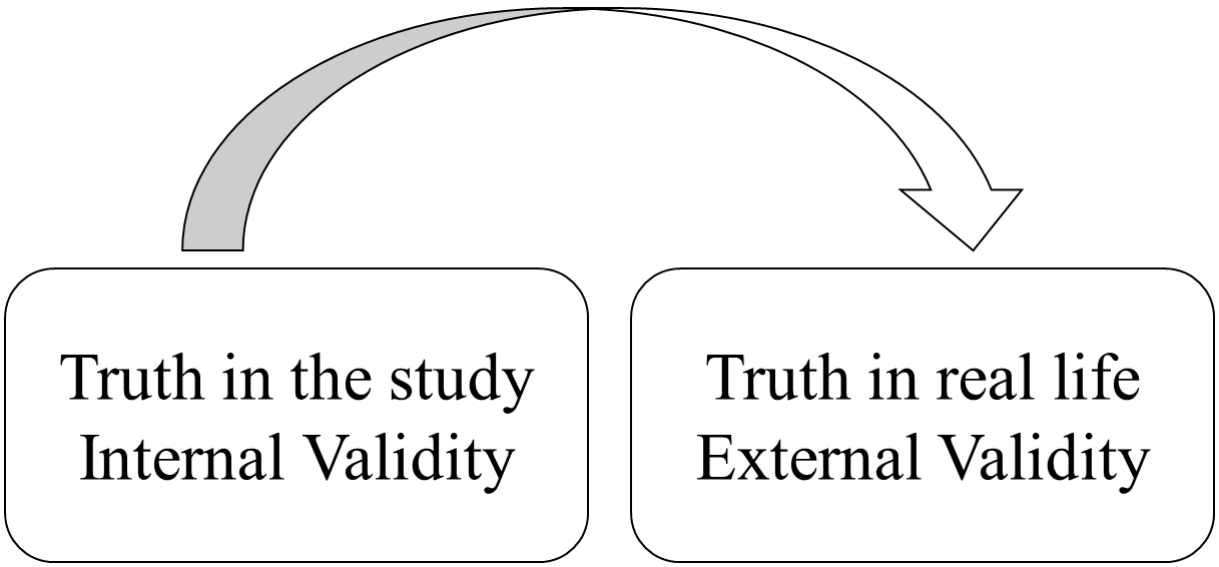
This thesis has been structured through an amalgamation of methods, including a combination of semi-structured interviews and systematic practice observations. In previous literature, criticism has surrounded the methodological choices made, with researchers commonly relying on a single strategy, restricting the possible exploration of the coaching process from a multitude of angles and viewpoints (Cope *et al*., 2017; Cushion & Partington, 2014). As coaching is considered messy, chaotic and unorganised (Hall *et al*., 2016), the present study wanted to actively seek the best methods to develop an understanding around the coaching process. To do this, methods were chosen to best support the enquiries being made around how, what and why coaches undertake practice in the way that they do, and the role their coaching philosophy plays in this. For this reason, utilising a mixed methods approach to undertake future coaching research may be a more compatible approach for exploring and understanding the unique experiences that coaches encounter and overcome as they coach. Underpinning the quantitative methods in conjunction with the qualitative coaches' experiences, will lead to the gaining of a holistic and full picture of coaching.

It is appropriate to acknowledge at this point that qualitative and quantitative approaches hold both strengths and weaknesses (Partington & Cushion, 2015), leading to the recommendation of combining methods. Early research (Lacy & Darst, 1985) embraced a quantitative approach however philosophical concerns have receded recently, with more contemporary research having been completed across a variety of disciplines including nursing, management and health (Taylor, 2006). Although still not as regularly occurring as single approaches to research, literature utilising mixed-method approaches have begun to emerge (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001).

Additionally, a mixed-method approach exploits the strengths of each approach being used, leading to an increase in validity in the findings (e.g. internal and external validity) (See Figure 2.4). Internal and external validity relate to whether the findings are

meaningful and trustworthy (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Furthermore, how well a study is conducted (its structure) relates to internal validity, whilst external validity relates to how applicable the findings are to the real world (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). It has also been noted that exploring research from wider, more varied perspectives may inform understanding whilst also enabling projects to add insight that may have been overlooked by single method approaches, therefore leading to a more complete assessment and ability to draw conclusions (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Figure 2.4 Internal and External Validity



However, as with single method approaches, mixed methods do have some negative considerations. Primarily, completing both qualitative and quantitative research individually, and most certainly if completed simultaneously, can be consuming in terms of time spent collecting and analysing data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Mixed methods designs can also utilise a variety of methods to collected data. For example, the parallel design involves both data sets being collected during the same phase of the research process, or a sequential design which involves one data set being collected before moving on to the next data set (Hardy *et al*., 1996).

Subsequently, this thesis combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the philosophical viewpoints and practices of foundation phase grassroots coaches, and the perspectives of coach educators. A researcher's alignment with a particular set of philosophical assumptions concerning the nature of reality, truth and knowledge will

shape the selection of research methods. This was undertaken with the intention of most effectively examining the research aims, whilst allowing for greater scrutiny into the undertakings of grassroots coaches and their understanding of the coaching process.

2.5.4 Justification for taking a Pragmatic Standpoint in Sport Coaching Research

Pragmatism can undertake action through both practical and mental progress. For example, Dewey (1910) believed that thinking was action, as much as action involved thinking. Due to the practical and flexible nature of pragmatism, the framework has begun to gain attention, as the sport coaching literature suggests that that there is limited value in subjective and objective research contesting and challenging each other (Biesta, 2010; Nelson & Groom, 2012). Currently, researchers face a metaphysical debate from one of two 'factions'; specifically, positivism and interpretivism (Gratton & Jones, 2004). By attempting to bring the thinking of positivists and interpretivists into closer alignment through a pragmatic approach, the present study has a unique opportunity to tackle a philosophical predicament that the sporting literature has been faced with for years (Nelson & Groom, 2012). Accommodating both metaphorical ends of the philosophical spectrum (Kaag, 2015), pragmatism has provided an opportunity for research to take place, with a flexible methodology being particularly attractive to researchers (Feinberg, 2012). With a dynamic ability to view both quantitative and qualitative data through the same lens, pragmatism has developed a reputation for being a practical philosophy, and the facilitator of mixed-method research (Biesta, 2013).

With pragmatism growing as a philosophical lens, arguments have been that the approach has replaced the philosophy of knowledge approach (Guba, 1990; Morgan, 2014); including the organisation and understanding of research through ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. However, Morgan (2014) highlights that pragmatism is informed by experiences and, therefore, philosophical assumptions around how we see the world (ontology, epistemology, methodology) are irrelevant. However, Morgan (2014) has not considered in enough depth what researchers have experienced, both formally and informally. The educational journey from student, being exposed to ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations through various discussions within taught sessions such as 'Research Methods', to a career in research form part of a pragmatist's experiences and consequently cannot be disregarded so easily. (Denzin, 2011).

Additionally, developing research through pragmatic means enables the bridging of diverse paradigms in science (Guba, 1990); whilst also interconnecting the chasm between

academic and non-academic endeavours (Korte & Mercurio, 2017). However, although pragmatism has been championed for looking forward into the practical outcomes ofresearch and theory, compared to looking backwards towards ontological, epistemological or methodological ideals, research has not necessarily explored and acknowledged this in great depth (Korte & Mercurio, 2017). Morgan (2014, p. 1045) criticised pragmatic research, claiming that mixed-method research was '…largely avoiding serious contact with the philosophical foundations of pragmatism', rather focusing on the flexibility of the approach; otherwise known as 'crude' pragmatism (Jenkins, 2017). 'Crude'-ness also occurs within coaching practice, such as a coach lacking in self-awareness and a coach who critically considers their practice to shape future actions (Hall & Gray, 2017), also termed habit and inquiry (Dewey, 1910).

Empirical research in sport coaching suits a pragmatic approach, with the concepts of habit and inquiry (Dewey, 1910) acting as a lens to examine the experiences of coaches and how these affect actions (Korte & Mercurio, 2017). However, such reflective processes only indicate what worked, not what works or will work (Biesta, 2013). Biesta (2013) also notes that research outcomes are not transferrable as rules or actions, rather the findings can only facilitate academia's ability to intelligently problem solve. Furthermore, research only provides answers around what has worked in a situation, not what will work in any future situation. Similarly, basing practice on 'what works' does not involve the depth of self-criticality required to develop practice and to therefore take the route of pragmatic coaching (Jenkins, 2017). Furthermore, utilising practice that 'gets results' would not constitute a philosophically pragmatic approach (Cushion & Partington, 2016), with calls for coaches to consider the positive and negative aspects of how they create and refine their knowledge (Cruickshank & Collins, 2017); resisting the temptation and luxury of following the 'best' or commonly accepted actions. Rather, a pragmatic coach may take the theories and techniques that appeal to them, experiment with them in practice, and then reflect on their effectiveness (Cox, 2013). This interpretation of experiences comes from the intertwining of our beliefs and actions through how we feel, context, emotions and social interaction which results in a 'truthful' lens to view the world; actions of inquiry providing the basis for belief (Dewey, 2008).

Although a number of paradigms exists (e.g. interpretivism, positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, participatory action frameworks, or pragmatism) that provide structure and a lens to understand research. These paradigms are underpinned through elements of philosophy such as axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Lincoln et al, 2011). A paradigm is both a practical and conceptual tool utilised to inform and solve

research questions and problems. Each paradigm has a differing perspective on the aforementioned philosophical considerations. As a research paradigm, pragmatism refuses to be drawn upon the continuous discussions around reality and truth (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Instead, pragmatism accepts that realities of single or multiple existence can be examined, with doubts surrounding reality being determined outright (Pansiri, 2005). With this in mind, pragmatists outline that reality is true to the extent that it is helpful in developing relations between additional elements of our experiences (James, 2000).

However, counter arguments regarding pragmatism exists, with scholars noting that the paradigm does not provide the necessary philosophical foundations for mixed-mthods research (Biesta, 2010); and instead, realism is a more valuable perspective to use (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). Further critics of pragmatism highlight that challenges of a practical nature exists such as the identification of socially situated research problems. Given that pragmatism is problem-centred and contextual in nature, pragmatism has a limited ability in identifying and then analysing structural problems (Thompson, 1997). Moving thought towards epistemological concerns surrounding research methodology, pragmatism faces challenges surrounding the depth available to pragmatic researchers. Should a problem have multiple levels and faucets to explore, researchers face challenges surrounding how each level would be observed or subsequently measured (Feilzer, 2010). With that being said, pragmatism provides an opportunity for researchers to experience independence of methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Being non-committal to a certain research method enables researchers to be flexible with their choices, along with an ability to combine multiple methods to effectively address the research problem. This has found scholars combining methods from various paradigms to the extant that those at differing ends of the methodological spectrum are combined (e.g. qualitative and quantitative) (Patton, 2002). To summarise, there is a growing preference among researchers to address research questions with the pragmatic credo of 'what works' (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). For most researchers committed to the thorough study of a research problem, method is secondary to the research question itself, and '…the underlying worldview hardly enters the picture, except in the most abstract senses' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, p. 21).

To justify the decision to take a pragmatic approach to the present study, there is a lack of clarity in sports coaching literature regarding philosophical pragmatism (Jenkins, 2017). Furthermore, there remains "a lack of consensus in the literature of philosophical pragmatism itself" (Hall & Gray, 2017, p. 46), with calls made for further legitimate and

empirical philosophical enquiry in this area. Habits and inquiry limit and extend, respectively, our ability, as researchers and coaches to take a critical stance in terms of moving away from well-tried approaches. Instead, moving towards seeking out the predicament in one's practice through doubt, self-critique and reflection (Dewey, 1933). In relation to coaching, such disruption and reflection has been seen within coaching literature in terms of reflection (e.g. Hall & Gray, 2016) and systematic observation (e.g. Partington *et al*., 2015). However, these examples remain infrequent with coaching researchers taking the 'tried and tested' approach to research so widely critiqued by Dewey (2008), rather than deeply, self-reflecting to develop through experiences disrupting habits and building inquiry.

Therefore, with a view of disrupting the methodological status quo, coaching research should be explored in partnership with coaches. Building on the currently limited exploration around coaching philosophy, practice and reflection through a mixed-method design. Hall and Gray (2017 p. 47) highlight that "pragmatically, collaborating with coaches through research inquiry has the potential to bring into focus the issues most relevant to practitioners themselves, and to more directly shape the development of coaching practice." Furthermore, through taking this approach to research, and by subjecting coaches to new contexts, actions, interactions and outcomes, coaches may be facilitated in the development of greater self-awareness and self-critique (Biesta, 2007).

2.6 Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the extant literature within sport coaching philosophy, practice and reflection. The present literature review set out to be critical in the examination of the extant body of literature regarding coaching philosophy, coaching practice and reflection. This has been supplemented by an introduction to the chapter along with a section discussing the role learning plays in coach development. The identified and critiqued literature has presented a range of strengths held by the body of work, but also numerous limitations which has helped to provide clarity, along with the positioning of the project. Furthermore, the review has highlighted the importance of the original piece of work being displayed within this thesis. A variety of literature has been amalgamated to form a holistic and coherent foundation for grassroots coaches and their considerations; such as the learning opportunities presented (formal, informal and nonformal), coaching philosophy, coaching practice and reflection. However, what current research, for the majority, has neglected is trying to gain an insight into what coaches do, how they do it and why they do it. As coaching is holistic, comprehensive and complex, research focusing on one element of the coaching process does not reflect the messy realities of coaching, nor does it represent

the practicalities faced by practitioners daily. Instead, pin-pointing elements of coaching, without considering the external influencers, risks creating a body of work that does not mirror what is seen in practice.

The body of work synthesised within this review has been organised around four key elements of a coaches understanding including coach learning, coaching philosophy, coaching practice and refection. The presented work highlights the varying factors considered by coaches in terms of their development and day-to-day delivery with thoughts given to how they learn, what they believe, what they practice and how they then consider that practice. However, there remains a lack of research that examines how such elements are balanced within the grassroots coaching context.

What has been derived from the extant literature is the need to examine the philosophies and practices of grassroots soccer coaches, in an insitu manner, to gain a contextual understanding of opportunities to enhance the current coach education provision. Furthermore, what is clear from the calls by previously completed research, investigations need to utilise a range of methods to gain a holistic and meaningful understanding of coaching (Cope *et al*., 2016). A study that encompasses objectives around what, why, how, when and where of coaches' practices would begin to tackle the issues highlighted within the body of literature presented within this review. Therefore, an investigation must look to incorporate a mixture of methods such as those highlighted within the present reviewsuch as semi-structured interviews, systematic coaching observations and perspectives of others. Therefore, the present study will look to undertake an examination of the philosophies, behaviours and practices present within grassroots soccer, considering the perspectives of coaches and coach educators.

Furthermore, a justification for the theoretical framework and methodological choices. The methods that were chosen to undertake an examination of the philosophies, behaviours and practices present within grassroots soccer. As this study was undertaken from the perspectives of coaches and coach educators, a range of methodological choices were made to align the research process to pragmatism, whilst also mirroring the experiences of practitioners out on the grass. In order to put these into methodological choices into context, the following chapter will look to clarify the appropriateness of the research tools by providing an overview of the philosophical assumptions that underpin all forms of research. In this regard, reference was made to the epistemological and ontological approaches of research and the traditional debates surrounding qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Secondly, this chapter discussed the individual research tools chosen to support

the present study, and with it, the appropriateness of said tools for the research undertaken, whilst also outlining the advantages and limitations of these methods in research.

CHAPTER THREE

Sport Coaching Practice in Grassroots Sport:

A Systematic Review

3.1 Introduction

As our understanding of coaching sport and the role of the coach within such an environment has developed, 'take-home' messages have evolved such as the importance for coaches to understand effective and age-appropriate coaching programmes for those involved (Stafford, 2011). Although the importance of developing our insights when coaching participants is clear (Chalip & Hutchinson, 2017), no paper, as of yet, has summarised and synthesized the research completed within a grassroots setting. Junior participants are the future of sports and are currently participating for fun and enjoyment purposes. As coaches and researchers alike, developing positive experiences for said participants will be the difference between having a thriving sporting community in the future or a generation of games consoles players and social media users (Morton, 2016).

A wide range of research on coaching practice is available, and its volume and scope have increased rapidly over the last decade (Rangeon, Gilbert, & Bruner., 2012). This creates a significant challenge for coaches and researchers in remaining up-to-date with the ever evolving database of studies and their findings (Nicholls & Polmans, 2007). Succinct summaries of relevant information are regularly required in such circumstances in order to accommodate the busy lifestyles researchers and practitioners lead (Hofmann, 2001). Existing examples of systematic reviews from coaching include Kahan's (1999) review of systematic observation studies of coach behaviour, Gilbert and Trudel's (2004) review of the coaching science research published from 1970 to 2001 and most recently Cope, Partington and Harvey's (2016) review of systematic observations in coaching research published between 1997 and 2016. Though useful and widely cited (Google Scholar, 2016), reviews of a similar nature focusing on coaching practice within a grassroots setting have yet to be completed. A summary of peer-reviewed research focusing on coaching practice would allow researchers to ensure they were undertaking relevant and required research to build upon the body of work already in existence. Similarly, this review will support practitioner's ability to practically apply coaching research into their practice. A further goal of this chapter is the facilitating of coach education developments in the formof research informed courses and practical coaching considerations.

From the outset it is imperative to clarify that the present study looks to focus on a grassroots level; that is those coaches involved in sport in a voluntary capacity. Furthermore, it is important to note the varying definitions of coaching with Côté and Gilbert, (2009) highlighting a range of regularly used phrases (coaching expertise, coaching effectiveness, effective coaching, and an expert coach), and the varying meanings for each label. As highlighted by Lyle (2002), a clear understanding of the meaning of effective coaching will help guide discussion throughout the present study. As defined by Côté and Gilbert, (2009), coaching practice is:

> The consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve participants' competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts. (p. 316)

Furthermore, it is important to define the varying contexts coaches can work within. Three varying levels have been identified through previous research (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006), consisting firstly of recreational, which has minimal focus on competition, whilst also being low intensity and commitment. The second is developmental which is more formally structured and gives greater consideration towards competition. Thirdly is the elite context. Those involved at this level are exposed to a higher level of structure, with a focus on a formal competition programme. Often coaches who work within this context are employed professionally and work with their group of participants on a regularly basis.

Alongside the aim of this chapter and the coaching context of the present work, the research team used Côté and Gilbert's (2009) definitions of "Participation Coach for Children" to define coaching. The scholars noted coaches must adopt an inclusive focus as opposed to an exclusive selection policy based on performance. They should organise a mastery-oriented motivational climate, set up safe opportunities for participants to have fun and engage playfully in low-organisation games. Furthermore, coaches must teach and assess the development of fundamental movements by focusing on the child first and promote the social aspect of sport and sampling. In addition, coaches must provide opportunities for participants to interact socially, to have fun and playfully compete. They should promote the development of fitness and health-related physical activities, teach and assess sport-specific skills in a safe environment for long-term sport involvement and teach personal and social assets through sport (e.g. citizenship) (Côté & Gilbert, 2009).

In terms of justification for focusing on grassroots setting rather than elite, the aforementioned domain involves more people (participants/coaches) than any other context (e.g., performance development, high-performance sport) (Sport England, 2016). Also,

generating and retaining participation is a challenge for sports key stakeholders. Coaches play a key role in such challenges given the regular contact they have with participants. Coaches have the opportunity to help develop a love for sport at an early opportunity (Lindgren, Hildiingh, & Linner, 2017). By displaying coaching behaviour and delivering practices that meet the needs of the participant through inclusive, participant-centred methods, coaches can begin to positively address this metric (Cope, Bailey & Pearce, 2013).

Political and social agendas affect grassroots sport, both positively and negatively. In 2008 a UK policy statement on sport, titled "Playing to win: a new era for sport*"* (DCMS, 2008) was published. The document outlined the ever-growing role of NGB's when developing community sport to combat political disruption (Piggott, 2012). The researcher goes on to discuss a new area dawning on sport, with a focus of developing coaches who can coach at a proficient level. The aims of such coaches include increasing participation, with the quality of experiences for the participants being at the core of governments plans. However, Côté and Gilbert's, (2009) note that '…there likely are very few examples of expert coaches in participation sport because they seldom remain long enough to develop the extensive knowledge (expertise) required to establish a history of effectiveness.' (p. 318). The researchers discuss that with limited formal coaching qualifications, continuous professional development, university education or mentoring/shadowing of higher-level coaches, opportunities for grassroots coaches to reach such a level are minimal.

With such a large population actively supporting the development of young participants, the importance of grounding all coach education with contemporary research is undisputable (Lyle, 2002; Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Cushion & Partington, 2014). However, in terms of informing coaching practice through coach education, this is widely viewed as being unhelpful in the eyes of coaches given the difficulty in terms of accessibility, complex language used and practical implementations, (Piggott, 2011). Grassroots coaches face challenges connecting their philosophy effectively to their coaching practice (Cushion, 2013). Therefore, we wanted to reveal and challenge the largely hidden practices of formal coach education in terms of their grassroots coach offering. Coach education can be one of the first experiences for grassroots coaches, with coach learning encompassing a range of experiences of nonformal, formal and informal scenarios (Mallett *et al*., 2009; Cushion, Nelson, Armour, Lyle, Jones, Sandford & O'Callaghan., 2010). With research outlining that empirical evidence should underpin practice for coaches, the aim of coach education is to advance the knowledge base held. This enables grassroots coaches to set pedagogically informed climates, inclusivity and appropriate organisation (Dixon, Lee & Ghaye, 2013).

Coach education consists of formal courses with certifications, continuous professional development workshops and in-situ support. A criticism of coach education is the short nature of the aforementioned support systems, along with the focus on short term knowledge transfers, compared to long term practice associated with self-development (e.g. reflection) (Chalip & Hutchinson, 2017). The researchers go on to note that coaching is dominated by the reactive identification and solving of problems, rather than the proactive development and evaluation of strategies to solve problems (Dixon *et al*. 2013).

When considering the history of sport coaching research, a positivistic approach was often taken (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). The core aim of research intended to explore the relationships between coach behaviours observed and the responses from those beingworked with (Kahan 1999). When considering the participant and the learning undertaken, research now views coaching as a social process, underpinned by numerous factors (Cushion, 2013). This differs from perspectives in previous years with the role of the coachhighlighted as a position of influence and centrality in terms of participant development (Cushion, 2010). With such considerations highlighted, the methodology underpinning sport coaching research should be all encompassing in its design, rather than the use of isolated methods. For example, observations alone would not appreciate the varying and numerous social and contextual elements that affect and influence a coaches' behaviour (Potrac *et al*., 2007).

When considering such socio-contextual factors, and with the aim of investigating such new areas of sport coaching research, additional questions required asking. These advancements in research led to the using of more-varied ranges of research designs (Cope *et al*., 2016). With this in mind, and as a possible consequence of the work produced by Kahan (1999), sport coaching research saw the expansion of methodologies of a mixed nature. Mixed-method approaches combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies such as working in tandem (Brannen, 2017). An example of effective mixed-methods research has been the incorporation of qualitative interviews used in conjunction with systematic observation (Cope *et al*., 2016).

The role of qualitative methodologies within sport coaching research is to facilitate the gaining of an understanding in terms of questions around 'how' and 'why'. To clarify, tools such as interviews provide researchers with insights into the how coaches utilise certain behaviours, practices and activities but also their rationale behind such implementation (Smith & Cushion, 2006; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002; Potrac *et al*., 2007; Partington, Cushion, & Harvey, 2014). The importance of attributing part of the research process as to

understanding the 'why', or rationale, of coaches' selections of practices, or their displaying of behaviours, is a key pre-cursor to the developing of 'what' coaches do (Potrac *et al*., 2007). When considering previous work completed within the field of sport coaching, alarge focused has been on the coaches themselves, however additional stakeholders have also been interviewed (e.g. participants, Webster, Hunt, & LeFleche, 2013; e.g. parents, Vinson *et al*., 2016). Gaining insights from those located outside of the immediate coaching provides further information into how coaching behaviours are perceived.

To try and understand such data, once gathered, researchers look to key theories and concepts to make sense of the pedagogical strategies implemented by the coaches, and why they were selected (Cope *et al*., 2016). Previous research has introduced sociological theories to try and understand the findings (Cushion & Jones, 2014), whilst others have preferred to utilise educational or psychological concepts (De Meyer, Soenens, Vanseenkiste,Aelterman, Van Petegen & Harens, 2016). However, a criticism of the general sport coaching body of work is the lack of depth researchers go into in terms of building on previous work. New theories are applied to coaching; however, these are not well developed(Cope *et al*., 2016).

Alongside qualitative data collection methods are that of a quantitative nature. One of the most prevalent collection tools in terms of sport coaching research from this quantifiable perspective is that of systematic observations (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). Applying systematic observations to research provides scholars with an opportunity to examine coaching traits, which are broken down into key behaviours (e.g. instruction, silence). Furthermore, tools such as the aforementioned facilitates the gaining of understanding around secondary behaviours, such as recipient, timing and delivered content. This is in addition to the varying form the delivered behaviours occurred (Cushion *et al*., 2012; Harvey *et al*., 2013). Due to the practical nature of systematic observation, sport coaching researchers have been able to examine, assess and understand differing sports and contexts. Though, it is key to note that a systematic observation tool is not all encompassing. Nor, is the method appropriate for all sports, studies and research questions that exist. Nevertheless, additional methods have been deployed such as time-use analysis. Thisfocuses on the varying times coaches spend engaging the participants, with regards to practice activities and forms (Lacy & Martin, 1994). Taking this form of data analysis provides an awareness of structure in terms of the design of a session. Additionally, how relevant the activities being delivered are concerning their appropriateness for the respectiveparticipant and their development (Harvey *et al*., 2013). The use of systematic observation and time-use analysis is intended to gather data most pertinent to that of the coach to effectively reflect

their practice. When looking to develop the work of systematic observations, combining the aforementioned tool with that of additional methods, such as time-use analysis, has been highlighted as a useful development in sport coaching literature(Cope *et al*., 2016).Through the merging of methods, nuances possibly missed are highlighted, with greater impact gained from the coaching context, delivered content and coaching behaviours displayed.

Considered as one of the most appropriate methods when identifying what coaches actually do, systematic observations are limited in that the behaviours observed cannot be contextualised without existing knowledge or understanding. Therefore, the role of qualitative data, such as interviews, plays a role in providing such context and clarity through the underpinning rationale for the employment of certain coaching behaviours (Cushion, 2010). Through the combining of methodologies, researchers can develop an awareness regarding what the coaches set out to achieve initially, the various inputs and factors that influences their decision making along with the additional interactions that develop research, such as those with key stakeholders or participants (Groom, Nelson, & Cushion, 2012; Cope *et al*., 2016). The purpose of the current study was to analyse published research on coaching practice within a grassroots sport setting. The aims of the review included examining and synthesising a database of coaching practice literature within a grassroots setting, whilst identifying areas for future research.

3.2 Methods

A systematic review of coaching practice literature published between 1985 and 2016 in peer-reviewed journals was undertaken. The purpose of this review was to answer the research questions "What coaching practice literature exists within the grassroots setting?" and "What future research could be undertaken to develop the current body of coaching practice literature within a grassroots setting?". Prior to commencing the search, a pilot study was undertaken, including experimentation with search terms and mini-searches, resulting in the development of agreed upon search terms and databases to be searched (Boland, Cherry & Dickson, 2014). To ensure reliability, a systematic review protocol was outlined (Appendix A1) and, a 3-step process commonly utilised within sports systematic reviews was followed (Cope *et al*., 2016; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). The three-step process included an agreed inclusion criterion regarding the article by the research team. Upon agreement, the article was read and coded. Next, the lead researcher drew upon the experience of doctoral supervisors to guide the coding and inclusion process.

The academics have provided training to the researcher and published similar articles. The third stage was the coding of 25% of the papers selected randomly (n=241), and completed independently, by the lead author. To ensure a rigorous and thorough process was completed, the secondary supervisor also undertook the initial coding process separately, agreeing with 231 of the papers, with ten disagreements. Inter-coder reliability was 96%, considering the disagreement. A discussion then took place between the lead and second author to discuss the final papers to be included (Cope *et al.*, 2016). This collaborative approach was undertaken to ensure the studies included in the review were reliable and appropriate for the study (Boland *et al.*, 2014). A full coding process was then undertaken by the researcher as detailed in Figure 3.1.

Identification of studies

Phase one consisted of studies being searched and obtained through electronic literature databases including SPORTdiscus, NORA, PsychLIT and PsychINFO, completed in April 2016. Due to the diverse terminology surrounding grassroots sport (e.g. participation, youth, community) there is a general lacking in consensus regarding jargon across sport coaching literature. Therefore, combinations of terms were employed in the search strategies including *Coaching Practice* AND *Sport* AND *Youth* OR *Grassroots* OR *Participation* to ensure all relevant articles that met the inclusion criteria were identified. Once no new articles were returned, database searches were concluded. Firstly, papers were examined by title, secondly, a full abstract was read and finally, a full version of the paper was read, with articles being excluded at each stage should they not satisfy the rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria. Furthermore, the search went beyond the outlines databases to ensure all relatable studies were included, that met the inclusion criteria. Considerations included those studies completed empirically, English written, participants who were actively coaching along with those working with individuals in a practical nature. What further enhanced the thorough nature of the present systematic review was the reading of additional reference lists of those articles which had been previously identified. With the intention of providing a robust and comprehensive reviews, emails were sent to relevant researchers with the hope of being signposted towards potentially obscure, yet relevant papers. This extended search enabled the lead researcher to find and examine papers that may otherwise have been missed.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were considered for inclusion only if they provided quantitative or qualitative

data on coaching practice in grassroots sport and had been published as full papers or research notes in peer-reviewed journals. In accordance with previous recommendations, studies were excluded if they had been published as abstracts or conference proceedings (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). Additionally, the table of contents of the following journals were searched to ensure a rigorous data collection process, with colleagues directing the authors to any other studies or journals that had not been identified (Turnnidge & Côté, 2016). The identified journals included: *Health Education, International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, Journal of Educational Psychology, Journal of Sport Behaviour, Journal of Sport Sciences, Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, Psychology of Sport and Exercise, Reflective Practice, Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sport, Sport Coaching Review, Soccer and Society, Sociology of Sport Journal, Sport and Exercise Psychology Review, Sport, Education and Society, Sport Psychologist, The Sport Psychologist, Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health and Quest*.

Sifting retrieved citations and Procedure

The research team agreed upon a suitable inclusion criterion (empirical, peer-reviewed study, written in English, the participants of the study were coaches or participants, the focus of the study looked at coaching practice and coaching behaviour, the study was focused at a grassroots level). Sifting was carried out in three stages as recommended by previous work (Rumbold, Fletcher & Daniels, 2012; Nicholls & Polman, 2007; Jones, 2004; Meade & Richardson, 1997). During the review process, the lead researchers was guided by the expertise of the doctoral supervision team. An extended search was achieved by reading the reference lists of articles identified in the previous phases. Upon completion of the sift, data was extracted to provide an overview of study characteristics with regards to 1) Publication Details, 2) Participant Type, 3) Methods and Data Collection and 4) Research Focus and Coaching Context (See Appendix A2).

3.3 Results

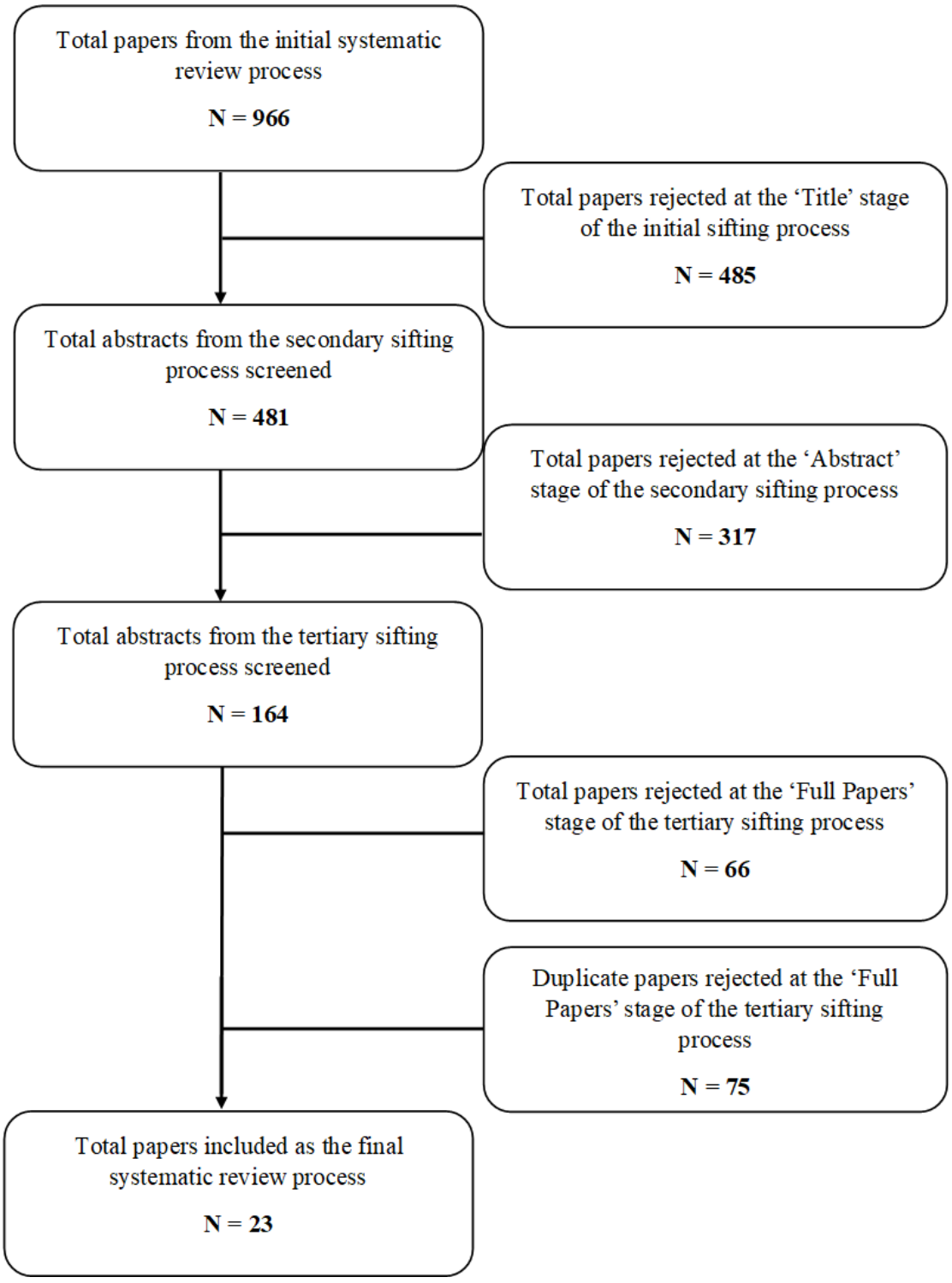
From 966 papers initially returned, 485 references were removed after reading their title during the first phase of sifting (see Figure 3.1). Abstracts were then read, with 317 papers being excluded from the study at this second stage of sifting. A total of 164 full papers were then screened, 141 of which were excluded. Thus, 23 empirical, peer-reviewed papers published between 1985 and 2016 on coaching practice in the grassroots domain were

included in this systematic review, see Appendix A3 for an Overview of Included Papers.

Publication Details

18 different journals published articles on grassroots coaching practice. The *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* and *Sport Coaching Review* both published two studies, with the following 16 journals publishing one article each: *Health Education, International Journal of Applied Sports Sciences; International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching; Journal of Educational Psychology; Journal of Physical Education and Sport; Journal of Sport Behaviour; Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology; Journal of Sport Sciences; Leisure Studies; Psychology of Sport & Exercise; Sport and Exercise Psychology Review; Sport, Education and Society; Sport, Exercise and Health; The Sport Psychologist; Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health;* and *World Leisure.*

Figure 3.1 Overview of the Systematic Sifting and Selection Process



The studies included in the sample were conducted in a total of eight different countries including the United Kingdom (n=9), United States of America (n=7), Portugal (n=2), France (n=1), The Netherlands (n=1), North America (n=1), Norway (n=1) and South Korea (n=1). In terms of synthesising the focus of the research, 15 studies focused on coaching behaviour, with two studies focusing on efficacy, philosophy and reflection and feedback respectively. There is growing interest within coaching practice research,

which was demonstrated with the increase in literature produced over the past 30 years with a focus on the discipline with the number of articles published increasing between 1985 and 1995 (n=2), between 1996 and 2005 (n=3) and substantially between 2006 and 2015 (n=18).

Participant Type

A range of study designs were included in the reviewed papers, with the majority of the articles (n=16) utilising a single participant group design. The remaining articles (n=7) employing a multiple participant group design or not clearly stating their design. Participant gender was also investigated with the broad design of the studies indicating a single gender sample (n=11) was the most popular within the articles reviewed. Of the studies included in the review, mixed gender samples (n=6) were exhibited, however multiple studies (n=6) did not clearly outline the gender sample used. Studies consisted of male only participants (n=8) and female only participants (n=3), with a number of studies examined a mix of genders in the same article (n=6). The review also highlighted a range of groups omitted from the studies included, including a mix of gender with regards to participants and coaches with no study outlining that their sample included male/female coaches and male/female participants.

The studies looked at a variety of age groups ranging between seven to 39 years of age. Within the 23 papers collated, a total of nine focused on participants between the ages of 12 and 19, with three studies focusing on participants younger than 11 years and 11 studies did not specify a clear age range focused on. A number of age groups were examined within the returned sample of studies reviewed, including participant participants with ages ranging from 12-19 years (n=15), and 7-11 years (n=8), and with the coach as the participant all studies 18-39 year (n=4). The participants from whom data were collected focused on the coach (n=14), however studies also gained data from the participant (n=5), with studies also gathering data from both coaches and participants (n=4). Furthermore, the review also highlighted a range of groups omitted from the studies included age ranges of participant participants below the age of seven along with coaches over the age of 39. Furthermore, there was a range of groups omitted by the returned studies, with none of the studies gathered data from parents, officials or other key stakeholders in the coaching process.

Methods and Data Collection

Overall, the full methodological spectrum was explored by the papers returned by the systematic review process. A large proportion of the included articles (n=20) utilising a single methods design, with the remaining articles (n=3) combining methodologies.

A quantitative approach (n=2) was the most common method of data collection between 1985 and 1995, mixed methods (n=2) the most common between 1996 and 2005 and finally qualitative (n=9) the most common between 2006 and 2015. Of those that did follow a mixed method approach, the combination of methods included systematic observations (E.g. Ford, *et al*, 2010), interviews (E.g. Claringbould, Knoppers & Jacobs, 2015), interventions (E.g. Harvey *et al*., 2013) and questionnaires (E.g. Choi, Cho & Kim, 2005). The most common data collection method of the qualitative studies was interviews (n=10) with systematic observations of coaching practice being a common feature of the quantitative studies (n=7). A range of studies (n=4) included data collection approaches encompassing a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection) approach which utilised a combination of interviews, observations, assessments, interventions, coaching tone, coaching journals and questionnaires (E.g. Harvey *et al*. 2013).

Research Focus and Coaching Context

Broadly speaking, the overall design of the sports focused on included both single and multiple types. Across the sample, 12 different sports were identified of which 12 studies included team sports (E.g. Duarte, Garganta & Fonseca, 2014; Lewis, Groom & Roberts, 2014) and two studies included individual sports (E.g. Nash & Sproule, 2011; Claxton, 1988), with the remaining studies not clearly identifying the sports being focused on. A range of studies (n=4) included two or more sports within their studies (E.g. Trottier & Robitaille, 2014). The most frequently focused groups included soccer (n=8), basketball (n=5), swimming (n=4), volleyball (n=3), rugby union (n=2), tennis (n=2), baseball (n=1), cheerleading (n=1), cricket (n=1), field hockey (n=1), softball (n=1), and water polo (n=1).

Sport context information included the sport focused on and the level being taken part in. The domain outlined included high school (n=4), youth (n=4), community (n=4), representative (n=3), recreational (n=3), elite (n=3) and grassroots (n=3). There was a noticeable drop in studies focusing on sub-elite (n=1), district (n=1), university (n=1), middle school (n=1), non-elite (n=1), participation (n=1), collegiate (n=1), amateur (n=1) and primary school (n=1), with a collection of studies (n=5) focusing on multiple levels. Dueto lack of definition of terms there may have been crossover and with this in mind, and to provide context in terms of the ranging levels of groups being work with by coaches (grassroots v competition), this review identified that 13 studies made a reference to a recreational context, 17 to a developmental context and three to an elite context.

In relation to the focus of the research included within the review, each article was read with the key aims and findings highlighted. Nine of the studies included had a focus on

what coaches do, with five examining what coaches believe they are doing. Additional foci included coach characteristics (n=3) and design and implementation of practice sessions (n=3). A variety of research focuses were omitted by the sample of students, including attempts at highlighting why coaches are doing what they are doing.

3.4 Discussion

The purpose of this chapter was to review studies that had focused on coaching practice and to consider the extent to which such research has been developed, whilst identifying possible future areas of investigation. When considering the research context, a number of gaps were highlighted as opportunities to enhance the current literature through the completed review. Although coaching practice research articles were a rarity 30 years ago, the popularity and interest in the field has led to a more regular production of publications in more recent times (Cope *et al.*, 2016). The development of coaching practice publications suggests that building an understanding of coaching behaviour is both of growing interest and importance with regards to the participants with and contexts being worked in (Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). The role such considerations play in ensuring long term participation highlight the need for further exploration of the variables of coaching practice (e.g. philosophy, behaviours, activities) (Stafford, 2011).

However, a challenge for researchers and practitioners is gaining all of the required information, as journals and articles may be widely spread. Previous workhas noted concerns within sport coaching research that a positivistic methodology has guidedthe works, with more limited designs produced around standpoints such as interpretivism, constructivism and pragmatism (Kahan, 1999). This has led to minimal studies gaining substantial insights into the contextual factors evident within practical coaching (Cope *et al.*,2016). Giving thought to the sports researched, a number of studies have focused on similarcontexts such as basketball and soccer, and these have been completed in either a training ora competition setting. A criticism of the sport coaching literature is the small samples deployed with a view of understanding complex and challenging research questions. This leads to a snapshot of findings rather than a comprehensive overview that could affect change. Nevertheless, when completed, findings surrounding ‘what’ coaches do provide knowledge that effectively develops our understanding of coaches. Thus, leading to the formulating of judgments regarding coaches’ behaviours and practices, and their appropriateness (Cope *et al.*, 2016).

A gap in the literature, however, was the connecting ofwhat coaches were aiming to achieve through their practice in terms of the context they werecoaching in, along with the alignment with their philosophy and the learning needs of their participants.

As the field of sport coaching research has become more established, the need for knowledge regarding coaching behaviours has increased. Gaining an understanding of what coaches perceive to be good practice, what this actually looks like in practice, how they implement such practice and why they implement such practice would enable sport coaching research to move forward. However, the extent to which this has been practically completed is questioned, when considering the confines of the specific contexts in which "coaching" takes place (Lyle, 2002).

Therefore, in order to gain the full picture desired by the researcher/practitioner, time spent searching for answers may lead to disheartenment. Such a concern highlights the importance of the present study, but also for studies in a similar form to be completed regularly to ensure an updated summary of coaching practice research is available on demand to inform practice and to drive future research (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). The discussion will be presented under the three broader themes: 1) Participant Type, 2) Methods and Data Collection and 3) Research Focus and Coaching Context.

Participant Type

In order to ensure the development of literature, the selection of participants studied needs to advance and certain issues must be addressed, mainly the age group being examined. Firstly, the age range of participants was focused on nine to 18 years (e.g. Smith, Ward, Rodrigues-Neto & Zhang, 2009; Mesquita, Sobrinho, Rosado, Pereira & Milistetd, 2008), with few studies looking into sport participants younger than nine years old. One example that was highlighted was the work of Conroy and Coatsworth, (2007). The researchers sample included 165 participants between the ages of seven and 18 years of age. A consideration may be the lack of accessibility and ethical considerations required for such a sample. However, as this is the age most people first play sport and receive coaching, it is important to know more about this group of participants and the experiences the coaches are providing for them (Stafford, 2011). With such experiences in mind, it is important for participant retention within sport that the coaching practice of those working within this setting is effective and appropriate (Santos *et al*., 2017). Therefore, due to the lack of research within this setting, it would seem that coach education is informed by theory and empirical study from a high-performance setting rather than that of a grassroots context. Structuring courses with such material may lead to inappropriate practices being developed given the limited transfer between such vastly differing contexts (Chalip & Hutchison, 2017).

Consequently, coaching practice research concerning young children in sport appears to be relatively underdeveloped. This is surprising considering the substantial literature published within the general and health psychology (e.g. Grant *et al*., 2017) concerning this population. In order for coaching practice literature to progress, and given the dearth of research within a grassroots context, a larger focus on those working with age groups younger than 11 years old would be useful. As a high number of participants enjoy sport prior to turning 11 years old (Sport England, 2016), the lack of empirical evidence displayed may impact our understanding of coaching practice leading to the detriment of long-term participation.

Furthermore, the current review highlighted key emphasis on those in the role of participant (e.g. Smith *et al*., 2009) and coach (e.g. Lewis, Groom & Roberts, 2014). However, few sports function without assistant coaches and parents and the present study suggests that gaining an understanding of such stakeholders would provide further understanding of coaching practice. The supporting role of an assistant coach aids the primary coach with problem solving, strategy, leadership and management (Hall *et al*., 2016). Future research with a focus on additional stakeholders was previously advocated (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004), however at the present time such sound future directions does not seem to have been acted on. Furthermore, with such focus on the head coach in the majority of coaching practice research readers are left with a "one-dimensional portrait of coaching" (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004, p. 396). Indeed, to provide a holistic picture, an understanding from varied viewpoints (e.g. coach, assistant, parents) would build upon the work being produced within coaching practice. When considering the varying developments within sport coaching research, one key variable is the domain being researched (e.g. grassroots/participant, development and performance). Initially, sport coaching research focused on those participating in a youth setting, whereas more recently studies have focused on those at the elite end of the spectrum (Kahan, 1999). Given this shift, previous work has outlined that even though youth sport can span across both participation and developmental levels, greater focus in more recent times has focused on the elite setting (Cope *et al*., 2016). Although useful in terms of providing a detailed understanding of what coaches actively employ in this domain (elite), this has led to the neglecting of those working at the lower end of the sporting spectrum (grassroots).

Methods and Data Collection

Historically guided by a quantitative approach to research, coaching investigations have followed a similar pattern outlined in physical education (De Meyer *et al*., 2016) and sport

psychology (Tristan *et al*., 2016). However, the role of a qualitative approach to research has become a more regular occurrence in the field of coaching. For example, Claringbould *et al*., (2015) interviewed 29 participants regarding their participation within youth sport. Sucha shift in epistemology has been linked to the body of work's demand for an all-round understanding of coaching, which therefore required an adjustment of methodological approaches (Harvey *et al*., 2013).

This review found that a common theme is the use of a single method of data collection within sport coaching research. Such an approach cannot look to definitively answers research questions due to the exclusivity and partiality of the data being collected. For example, within the present study, nine studies used quantitative methods as the form of data collection such as Mesquita *et al*., (2008) who observed 11 coaches and their behaviours within volleyball. However, such studies were not able to provide answers concerning why coaches are showcasing the behaviours on display due to the restrictions placed on them by the methods being used.

With a large portion of the studies returning quantitative research methods, the review highlights that although the role of qualitative methods are being implemented within coaching research, quantitative approaches remain a well utilised method within the present sample of studies (e.g. Low *et al*., 2013; Duarte *et al*., 2014). Such a volume of qualitative research displays the developments in coaching since Gilbert and Trudel (2004) highlighted the need for further qualitative investigations, which Nash and Sproule (2011) have added too in more recent times. Quantitative methods such as questionnaires remain a popular choice within coaching research (e.g. De Marco *et al*., 1997; Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007). However, the rich, detailed data provided by qualitative interviews seems to be becoming a popular method, for example Thomas *et al*., (2013) interviewed rugby union coaches to try and understand the challenges they are associated with.

One methodological change, advocated by Gilbert and Trudel (2004), was the incorporation of mixed-method approaches within a single study. The researchers outlined that less than 15% of the articles within coaching science research utilised such an approach, with the present study noting 13% of the research implemented a mixed method approach (Jones *et al*., 1997; Harvey *et al*., 2013). Such eagerness to see this form of methodology implemented is down to the triangulation offered which would lead to an enhanced multi-layered understanding of the coaching process (Jones *et al*., 1997; Potrac *et al*., 2000; Trudel *et al*., 2001). Furthermore, such methods would "capture" the sophistication of the coaching process. This can be seen within Harvey *et al*.,'s (2013) research, working closely with three

coaches at a Collegiate (University) level across a range of team sports. The present review found that a range of studies examined coaching behaviour (e.g. Ford *et al*., 2010; Erickson, & Cote, 2015), however studies exploring the knowledge and attitudes on coaches were relatively limited, which was a similar concern outlined by Gilbert and Trudel (2004). While this area of development was urged by the researchers, a similar situation still exists in that we know very little regarding coaches' attitudes and knowledge signifying that researchers have not acted upon the suggestions made in 2004.

Research Focus and Coaching Context

With regards to the investigations undertaken by coaching researchers, a variety of features have been studied surrounding coaching and the coaching process such as coaching philosophy (e.g. Cushion & Partington, 2016) and coaching practice (e.g. O'Connor *et al*, 2017; Hall *et al*., 2016). However, what coaches actually do with regards to their behaviour has been the focus of the majority of coaching research produced (e.g. Choi *et al*., 2005; Ford *et al*., 2010). With teaching and coaching research providing empirical data, the role of systematic observation is significant. For example, Ford *et al*., (2010) were able to find that soccer coaches provided high level of instruction, feedback and management within activities, findings that may have not been evident within a purely qualitative study. With that being said, the need for descriptive studies to inform understanding and to develop knowledge remains a valuable contribution to the literature, although the impact is not as great as that of mixed methods. For example, Horsley *et al*., (2015), collected data through qualitative interviews however they could not compare this data to the actions of the coaches. Therefore, utilising a mixed method approach would provide a holistic approach to gaining an understanding of what coaches do, how they do it and why they are doing it.

A multifocal approach has been seen more frequently, both in teaching (Boniwell, *et al*., 2016) and physical education (Hastie, *et al.*, 2016). For example, studies combining behaviours with further elements of coaching such as thoughtsand characteristics. Such an all-inclusive approach has been encouraged and supported due to the level of depth researchers are able to examine whilst providing a more complete representation of coaches and the coaching process (Jones, *et al.*, 1997; Potrac *et al*., 2000; Trudel, *et al.*, 2001). A dynamic and complex process, coaching is context-dependant and requires a multitude of dimensions to capture its core characteristics in order to deliver valuable findings for researcher and practitioner beneficiaries alike (Lyle, 2002).

In general, the range of sports utilised in the sample gathered is promising with researchers examining both team (e.g. Larsen *et al*., 2015) and individual sports (e.g., Horn, 1985; Claxton, 1988). However, something that provides concern is the lack of individually focused sports since the 1980's. Such a preference for researching team sports and what seems to be a neglect for individual sports, means the field of sport coaching practice literature is askew, with researchers gaining only a partial understanding of the on-goings in practice. The focus of coaches' practice within individual sports have not been developed and further research in this context would be welcomed.

When considering the various elements of those who are being worked with, coaches need to consider the various ethical considerations that may constrain them and should be considered. The key point here is that scholars should not be put off in terms of working with those coaching in the younger age groups. Nevertheless, precautions should be taken toensure ethical concerns have been appropriately overcome (Cope *et al*., 2016). Possible considerations regarding videoing coaches working with children along with observing practice of sport such as swimming and gymnastics must seek informed, parental consent and child assent. Scholars should also be aware of those who may inadvertently appear in video recordings who should be made aware and be consented. While this is challenging, scholars can look to pixelate faces and clothing to ensure anonymity.

The transferability of elements of the coaching process has to be acknowledged. Indeed, Lyle (2002) highlights elements, such as organisation and training, as being generic across sports however the specific sport or context itself may be the challenge for coaches. The researcher notes that coaching within a group compared to on an individual basis requires vastly differing skills and provides an array of divergent challenges. With this in mind, producing research examining specific contexts within sport may shed light on a relatively untouched aspect of coaching practice research, such as grassroots soccer.

3.5 Summary

Coaching practice has a significant impact on participants' experiences of sport in grassroots settings. Although existing literature has offered insights into the roles, actions and activities of coaches more broadly, studies within a grassroots setting are limited. Without a clear understanding of coaching practice in the grassroots setting, research cannot be sure of the role coaches play in the development of young participants in terms of supporting life-long participation, the provision of empowering environments and the facilitation of health and well-being (Stafford, 2011). The review was undertaken to inform policy and practice in sport coaching, and to identify gaps in the literature to be addressed through future research.

With this in mind, the purpose of the present study was to detail an examination of the 1) Publication Details, 2) Participant Type, 3) Methods and Data Collection and 4) Research Focus and Coaching Context of the included articles. Following Nicholls and Polman's (2007) design, comprehensive literature searches of NORA, PubMed, Scopus and SPORTdiscus along with manual searches of journals and their reference lists were carried out. From 966 returned articles, 23 studies met the inclusion criteria. Findings indicate that the majority of research undertaken in the area of coaching practice within a grassroots setting has been focused towards participants of 14 years or above. Furthermore, a single method design has been routinely used with a focus on team sports. Consequently, grassroots sport concerning the 5-11 age group is less well developed, particularly in individual sports. Future research should also be conducted through a mixed-method approach to provide more holistic findings by exploring a coaches' philosophy, behaviours and practices to provide a complete picture of coaching.

3.6 Conclusion

The present study has looked to contribute to an integrative paradigm; where practice guides theory and theory guides practice (Haag, 1994; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). As such, an objective cannot be entirely realised until the current state of coaching research is understood. This chapter has provided an overview of the current coaching practice literature within a grassroots setting. As the majority of researchers and practitioners cannot spend hours sifting through relevant research, this article provides an overview of some of the key characteristics of coaching practice research with the aim of supporting the retrieval of relevant articles (Nicholls & Polman, 2007). In terms of the wide-spread and convoluted landscape of grassroots sport coaching literature, the lowered opinion of practitioners on academic research could be explained. As the majority of coaches within this setting hold voluntary status along with employment and possibly caring for a family, finding time to develop their knowledge of coaching may be limited (Stafford, 2011).

This review has summarised the Participant Type, Methods and Data Collection and Research Focus and Coaching Context of the coaching practice research that has been undertaken within a grassroots setting. This information may be of use to coaching practitioners and researchers alike, when considering practical coaching sessions and future research investigation. Furthermore, this review has attempted to address the theory-practice gap in coaching (Potrac *et al.*, 2000), although the realisation that knowledge and appropriate experience, not mere information, is key in the development of practitioners and researchers (Chalip, & Hutchison, 2017).

With a view of recommending future research, what has become apparent throughout the review is the focus on age groups at the higher end of the maturation scale (Stafford, 2011). As noted within the present study 0% of research examined participants below the age of 11 years old, specifically. Therefore, to provide a holistic understanding of grassroots sport, investigating coaching practice within such age groups (5-11 years) would be a significant step to supporting this development.

Additionally, highlighted within the review was the range of studies focusing on one data collection method such as qualitative interviews or quantitative observations. Within coaching practice, both methods provide rich, evidence-based data. However, to understand the coaching process in the depth replicated in professional sports (Partington & Cushion, 2013), implementing a mixed-methods approach would provide further clarification, explanation and knowledge. This would also provide information of not just what is going on but what this also looks like in practice. Understanding what coaches do, how they do it and why they are doing it would further strengthen the field of coaching practice based within a grassroots setting.

The purpose of the current study was to analyse published research on coaching practice within a grassroots setting. The aims of the review included examining and synthesising a database of coaching practice literature whilst identifying areas for future research. Indeed, to provide a holistic picture, future studies should consider taking varied viewpoints (coach, assistant, parents), implementing a variety of mixed-methodologies (Interviews, observations, questionnaires) and utilizing a wider-ranging sample (recreational, development, elite, male, female, mixed).

CHAPTER FOUR

A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological andepistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches.

4.1 Introduction

It has been suggested that the philosophy held by a sports coach ranks highly in the shaping of practice (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Lyle, 2002), although not all active coaches are aware that they import their own personal philosophical stances of their practices (Horsley, Cockburn, & James, 2015). Examining and understanding coaches' philosophy provides an insight into their behaviours (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Jenkins, 2010; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2004; Lyle, 2002; McCallister *et al*., 2000). This is why coach education highlights this as a core topic (e.g. Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Outlining a 'coaching philosophy', combined with critical reflection, will facilitate an opportunity for a coach to develop understanding and progress her/his coaching practice (Jenkins, 2010).

To further detail the foundations of a coaching philosophy, in the present thesis this relates to the thinking and acting in terms of how a coach perceives philosophical questions. These questions concern a number of differing standpoints and variables including axiology (values), ethics (morality), ontology (meaning), epistemology (knowledge) and phenomenology (experience; Hardman & Jones, 2013; Cushion & Partington, 2014). What is key to be emphasised is the role such philosophical deliberations play in providing effective direction and guidance in what can be a lonely, unstructured world (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). Furthermore, a coaching philosophy provides guidance in the form of a framework which allows coaches to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, practices and behaviours with the overall intention of improving their knowledge and subsequent practice (Schempp, McCullick, Busch, Webster & Mason, 2006; Nash *et al*., 2008).

When delving into the perceptions of a coaching philosophy, practitioners tend to describe practical solutions, that is, practices that gets results or ideas that work well (Cushion, 2013). Such descriptions tend to navigate away from philosophic notions of previous times,such as the words of Nietzche. Indeed, such philosophies, that is those described by the aforementioned coaches, have been outlined as "practice theories" (Cassidy, 2016), and tend to describe a more-ideologic, outcome-based approach to "coaching philosophies". Researchhas observed that descriptions of philosophy in such a manner are developed from their experiences of coach education and the philosophical development

they have encountered on course and through workshops (Cushion & Partington, 2014). When giving further thought to the considerations underpinning coaches' understanding of philosophy, often outcomes of coaching practice are tentatively offered in replacement. For example, coachesoutline their philosophy as fun (Robbins, Houston & Dummer, 2010) or how the team the coach is working with intend to set up tactically (Cordes *et al.,* 2012). Further descriptions have seen coaches vary on both their understanding and their interpretation of the term philosophy. Phrases such as developing the 'beautiful game', developing participants holistically (Cassidy, 2010) and being 'participant-centred' (Kidman & Lombardo, 2010) have been used leading to the notion that coaches perceive ideological considerations as philosophical (Cassidy *et al.,* 2009). What has been consistent through an examination of previous sport coaching philosophical enquiry is the notion that practicing coaches are focused on the practicalities of coaching rather than the deep, reflective philosophical process available to them (Cushion & Partington, 2014).

When looking further into the role of coaching philosophies and the practices of coaches, what is evident is that, conflictingly, coaches do not always practically implement their philosophies (McCallister *et al*., 2000). Previous work has found that discrepancies exist between the narrative of what coaches say they will do and what they actually do (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Therefore, coaches may be more competent discussing philosophy than implementing it, or in other words, talking the talk rather than walking the walk (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). What could be deduced by such statements is that inconsistencies exist between a coaches specific coaching practices and their coaching 'philosophy' (Carless & Douglas, 2011; Cushion & Partington, 2014). Differences can certainly be seen in terms of the neat, tidy, organised and encompassing rhetoric coaches outline as their coaching philosophies, compared to the messy, complex and ever-changing nature of a coaching session (Cassidy *et al*., 2009).

When manging the 'tensions' between philosophy and practical coaching, a proposition of focusing on appropriate practice rather than 'principled' practice was suggested (Jones & Wallace, 2005; Raffel, 1999; Blum & McHugh, 1984). Principles, described as strong beliefs in the 'rightness' of one's actions has been suggested to be the underpinning of what enables elite coaches to stay focused in terms of their purpose, sense of direction and ever-increasing personal standards within the aforementioned complexity of the coaching process (Jones & Wallace, 2005). The aforementioned researcher's proposition of principled practice mirrors that of philosophical contemplation, through the reflexive thinking regarding the key questions surrounding axiology, ontology, philosophy

and ethics amongst others outlined by (Hardman & Jones, 2013). What has been suggested through previous work (Nash *et al*., 2008), is that coaches do not engage with philosophical practices of this nature. Furthermore, coaches are, possibly subconsciously, battling a career of experiences and information that conflict with this notion of philosophical development, highlighting the value in gaining an insight into coaches' experiences, knowledges, biographical information and core learning moments (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Indeed, coaching practice that is developed or learned consciously, can lead to the ingraining of habits that may not be reflective of coaches' true philosophy (Nash & Collins, 2006). What such a statement highlights are the need for academics to gain further insights into the core underpinnings of coaches practice, with the aim of engaging coaches in undertaking greater philosophical reflection (Cushion & Partington, 2014).

What is evident in the extant sport coaching literature is the varying standpoints of those theorising coaching philosophy (Hardman & Jones, 2013) and those practicing coaching who take a 'what works' approach to practice (Cushion & Partington, 2014). What such differences highlight is the lack of research that comprehensively examines coaching philosophies, in a philosophic manner. Through the examining of previously completed interview-based studies, coaches tend to be focused on developing humanistic principles within their participants (e.g., Jones *et al*., 2004; Smith & Cushion, 2006; Nash *et al*., 2008; Bennie & O'Connor, 2010). Giving further thought to this notion, coaches tend to hold concerns for personal growth of their participants, the development of respect for others and also the effective working in partnership (Lyle, 1999). However, what should be noted is that the aforementioned work does not actively engage with elite-based coaches who, inherently, would be extremely focused on winning and achieving success rather than such characteristics (Smith & Cushion, 2006). When considering further this quandary, that is, the focus on achieving success, this has consistently torn coaching researchers apart, in terms of being a philosophical dilemma (Light & Evans, 2010). Therefore, actively engaging coaches to further delve into the roots of philosophical constraints, considerations and thoughts will facilitate the development of a greater body of work to move the domain closer to completion, although this may be fantasy.

Although the body of work that directly examines coaching philosophy may be small, limitations still exist (Jenkins, 2010). For example, previous studies have only focused on interviews which provide only a preview of what the coach may actual hold in terms of knowledge. This approach also does not examine what a coach may demonstrate in practice. Furthermore, research displays the notion that philosophies are ever evolving as a coach

gains experience and moves through critical incidents (Jenkins, 2010; Kidman and Lombardo, 2010). To bring such a concept to life, an Olympic coach highlights their own development process due to the exposure to a critical learning moment (Potrac, 2004 interviewing Peter Stanley):

> It was a freezing cold night and we were working indoors. Anyway, he came downand did his jump and it was bad. It was a bad jump and he landed in the sand and looked upwith a look of 'Oh God' and I said, 'You ran in well there, you just dropped your hips a bit to early'. He said, 'Pete, I don't come here to be bullshitted by you. It was crap.' He said, 'Don't bullshit me. It was crap and I'll go back, and I'll do it again. 'So, I thought, rather than look for positives with everybody, I'm going to base my feedback around what they want to know and what they, as individuals, want to get from each session. (p.79)

With the aim of overcoming such limitations, ensuring researchers connect coaches' intentions to their behaviours along with the experiences they have had and the activities they undertake, and implement is key. To do so, examining the coaches' biography, their planning process and previous knowledge along with what the coach does during their coaching in terms of the activities delivered and the behaviours displayed is key. Also, what the coach does upon completion of practice in the form of their reflections, allows a researcher to gain an insight into the coaching process (Cushion *et al*., 2012). With the aim of developing further understandings surrounding coaching intentions in conjunction with the factors that shape said intentions (Lyle, 2007), the present works engages coaches to ensure the alignment in the recommended method of taking the sport coaching research forward positively (Potrac *et al*., 2000).

Understanding philosophical concepts

A disjointedness remains around the definition and conceptualisation of a coaching philosophy (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Additionally, socially accepted methods of coaching, or 'folk pedagogy', influences beliefs and assumptions of coaches which dilutes the image of 'valid' coaching (Potrac *et al*., 2007). Due to the folk pedagogical approach employed by many coaches, research has involved little philosophical examination' (Cushion & Partington, 2014). This is despite Hardman and Jones (2013) call for greater insights of the apparent misalignment, misunderstanding, and lack of rigour associated with coaches coaching philosophy. Morgan (2006) described philosophy as 'complex', 'diverse' and 'difficult to define' and may explain why practitioners tend to skip over thorough and time-consuming contemplation of their philosophies. The consequence is the development of artificial considerations regarding coaches' values and beliefs, which might impact upon

coaching practice (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Jenkins, 2010). As an alternative, coaches look to the outcomes their coaching provides for personal endorsement, such as effective tactical considerations or competition results (Cordes, *et al.,* 2012), along with any satisfaction communicated by participating "participants" with respect to the session (Cassidy, 2010). Taking this approach has led to a coaching philosophy being underpinned by practice that has been developed through approaches based on 'what works' or, through the coaches' perceptions, what achieves results (Cushion, 2013). Building on the theme thatphilosophy plays a vital role in the enhancement of coaches' practice, Cushion & Partington(2014) highlighted that thinking philosophically is not an essential requirement in order to coach. Indeed, practitioners seem to display a limited desire to think philosophically(Partington & Cushion, 2013). Disconcertingly, philosophical considerations, belief systemsand the values that are held by coaches have great influence when constructing practice which suggests greater emphasis should be placed on understanding the role of philosophical elements (Stodter & Cushion, 2017).

Within the field of coaching philosophy, previous work has provided what has been considered a combination of confusing and conflicting results (Cushion & Lyle, 2010), or what we have termed as a 'fog-like' overview. This is due to the examination of factors away from philosophical enquiry. Main features of previous work have revolved around the agenda of the researcher and competitive outcomes rather than insights into coaching philosophy, knowledge or practice (Cushion & Lyle, 2010). To attempt to provide clear structure to this present study and alleviate the aforementioned confusion, this chapter suggests that coaches' philosophy consists of personal values and beliefs, synergistically aligned with the coaches priorities and knowledge base (Kretchmar, 1994; Vealey, 2005; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008). This working definition could well be applied to coach education to ensure that coaches are better able to develop practices they perceive to be of optimal benefit for their participants (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gjesdal, Wold, & Ommundsen, 2019; O'Gorman & Greenough, 2016). To gain an understanding of coaches' philosophical standpoint, three central concepts were used as lenses through which coaches' philosophies could be investigated, including axiology, ontology and epistemology. Axiology is concerned with values, ontology is concerned with gaining an understanding of the nature of reality, and epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge (Cushion & Partington, 2014; Hardman & Jones, 2013; Morgan, 2006).

Operationalising philosophical concepts (in coaching)

Gaining an overview of coaches' philosophy provides a window into their values, beliefs and assumptions (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). It also provides an insight into the varying types of knowledge to which coaches have been exposed, and their priorities in terms of practical deliveries in the field (Cushion *et al*., 2003). Given these assumptions, it has been argued that establishing a clear understanding of the underpinning concepts of coaches' philosophy facilitates opportunities to apply techniques that coaches consider to be most beneficial for the participant (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Collins, Gould, Lauer, & Yongchul, 2009).

It has been suggested that taking an approach to coaching with minimal philosophical foundations or regular reflective considerations can lead to coaches implementing practices which [at worst] may be rooted in poor practice. Such methods, that is, practices that are not philosophically driven (Cushion, 2013), may reflect the aim of gaining acknowledgement from peers (Cushion, 2007). Contrastingly, those who have established values along with a coaching philosophy and who regularly reflect upon their responsibilities will provide more effective coaching to participants whilst also being able to more competently meet their needs (Nash *et al*., 2008). Inexperienced coaches can cope with increased pedagogical demands (Atkinson & Harvey, 2017), although due to the 'complex' nature of the coaching process such practices take place in an improvisatory manner rather than planned and well-thought out (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Cushion & Jones, 2014). Similarly, coaches who spend limited amounts of time critically developing their philosophical views tend to take the 'what works' approach (Cushion, 2013). Such practices contradict the notion that philosophy should be a thorough, conscious activity consisting of meticulous reflection (Cushion & Partington, 2014).

Following on from this, opportunities are available for coaches to develop ideological considerations of their coaching philosophy, and reduce constraints on their thinking (Cushion, 2013). This would provide coaches with an opportunity to deconstruct who they are, what they believe and value, and internally consider their purpose as coaches. Understanding the varying constrictions placed on coaches socially whilst clarifying their existence as a coach, will lead to greater reflexivity and enhanced synergy between philosophy and practice (Cushion, 2013).

Usefulness of philosophical concepts to coaches

Philosophical considerations could be considered useful to coaches as components of formal coach development programmes, as they provide opportunities for coaches to critically examine their practices. This process would involve the identification and development of

understanding of their beliefs, values, practices, and their relevant synergies (Cushion, 2013). However, it is 'folk', or traditional, pedagogies that are displayed as core learning moments for coaches, and, therefore, provide the frameworks for their actions rather than personal coaching philosophies. These 'folk' approaches are often anecdotally derived and are passed down from more experienced coaches to novice coaches. The perception is that such approaches are considered good coaching practice with minimal critical consideration being undertaken (Cushion, 2013).

Even the most competent coaches may have a plan which they are hoping to influence, however, this is often not implemented (Harvey, *et al.*, 2013; Partington & Cushion, 2013). With this in mind, it can only be assumed that even a rigorously developed philosophy may not be practically realised (McCallister *et al*., 2000). Alongside the passing of 'folk' pedagogy, additional challenges with regards to implementing philosophically driven coaching remains such as time constraints (Søvik, Tjomsland, Larsen, Samdal, & Wold, 2017) and the need for immediate validation through external success (Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Furthermore, due to a lack of criticality, coachesperceive their practices as successful, leading to the neglecting of deep, reflection in terms of understanding their practice (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Such claims are further enforced by a study of coaches within an English Premier League setting who found caringdifficult, with regards to their philosophical development (Cronin, Knowles & Enright, 2019). Given that the early moments of coaching are most likely to be influenced informally,such folk pedagogies will have become ingrained compared to the practices of philosophicalconsideration (Nash & Collins, 2006).

Towards the development of coaching philosophy research

When considering opportunities to develop and enhance the literature base of coaching philosophy, it could be argued that currently the work is superficial and descriptive with minimal depth applied to the philosophical questions posed (e.g. Martens, 2012; McCallister *et al*., 2000; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Voight & Carroll, 2006). Challenges in identifying ontological and epistemological beliefs along with axiological, ethical values remain, due to their implicit nature leading to difficulty in identification (Cushion, 2013). Voight and Carroll's (2006) work claimed to have examined coaching philosophy. However, this study focused on participants' ambitions rather than their philosophical stances. This led to Cushion's (2013) claim that the researchers acquired an understanding of what works well and what gets results rather than the study being a thorough philosophical examination.

While the article is of use in its own right, it provides minimal advancement of coaching research's understanding of what underpins coaches' actions (Grant, 2007).

To build on the extant literature of sports coaching philosophy, an approach needs to be developed to examine what coaches consider to be important (axiology) and the moral values (ethics) a coach holds. Further, investigating coaches' ontological beliefs, in terms of their coaching, self-understanding and self-esteem provide insight into the importance of why they coach. Finally, exploring coaches' beliefs in the development of knowledge, or epistemology, facilitates understandings about what they believe to be true about effective coaching. As such philosophical considerations underpin the practical activities implemented, an examination of such considerations provides insight into coaches' personal narratives (Jones *et al*., 2004; Light, 2008). There are minimal studies examining the philosophical underpinnings of coaching practice within grassroots soccer settings, thus the understanding of coaching philosophy and practice remains deficient. Calls for researchto examine coaches' philosophy further have been made due to the vacuum currently present between practitioners and academics (Cushion & Partington, 2014). We envisage that the findings of this work will provide a further understanding ofwhat underpins coaches' actions, specifically those coaching within grassroots soccer. Suchunderstandings will facilitate the development of knowledge with regards to the choice's grassroots coaches make. They should also influence coaching practices and behaviours thatcoaches consider to be effective and valuable for those they are coaching.

To begin to address the current gap in the literature, one of the objectives of the study is to investigate both educators and coaches' biographies in comparisons, along with what coaches do and with whom. Furthermore, gaining an insight into the knowledge of coaches and coach educators (what coaches know), their practice activities and coaching behaviours (what they do) and their critical reflections (why they do what they do), will provide insight into their practical behaviours and activities. As such, this study intends to answer the following research question:

> RQ1: What are grassroots coaches understanding of coaching philosophy with regards to the shaping of their coaching practice?

4.2 Method

Grassroots soccer coaches axiological, ontological and epistemological perspectives when coaching Foundation Phase soccer were investigated through the implementation of qualitative, semi-structured interviews. As defined by the English Premier League and The English Football Association, the 'Foundation Phase' of football training and playing refers to participants under 11 years age of age. Taking a pragmatic approach to research, the data was analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to provide rich, detailed accounts of the coaches' opinions and thoughts regarding their philosophical knowledge. Pragmatism provides an opportunity to explore the experiences of sport coaches, rather than intending to develop objective truths or theories (Nelson, Groom & Potrac, 2014). Furthermore, pragmatism facilitates the development of insights into the social complexities of sports coaching leading to the generation of knowledge for understanding and then practical action (Jones & Wallace, 2005).

Participants

10 coaches took part in this study. They coached at the Foundation Phase, grassroots level in soccer (e.g. participation, novice, youth). The coaches voluntarily committed between 60-120 minutes per week to coaching, plus a competitive match during theweekend. The coaching teams included a 'Head Coach/Manager', with an occasional'Helper'. The participants involved would predominately train between the hours of 5pm and 8pm, after previously completing a day at school.

Participants met the following inclusion criteria:

> They held the maximum of a Level Two in Soccer Coaching qualification (no formal coaching qualification and Level One in Football Soccer were both accepted).
>
> They were active coaches within the Foundation Phase (between the ages of under 5years up to under 12 years),
>
> They had a minimum of one-year (12 months) coaching experience along with no previous (or current) professional coaching involvement.

The participants included both male and female coaches (F=1, M=9) with a variety of occupational roles (See Table 4.1). Those roles included an Outdoors and Wildlife Manager, a Teaching Assistant, a Solicitor, an Engineer, an IT Manager, a Civil Servant, a Marine Fire and Safety Manager, an Accountant, a Support Worker and a Joiner. The participants

coaching experiences ranged from one year to 20 years (m=8.1 years), with an age range of 38 years to 54 years (m=43 years). Participants included coaches who were unqualified (n=2), as well as those who held formal qualifications at Level one (n=5) and Level two (n=3). They coached with children of various age groups within the Foundation Phase (U7s (number of coaches working at this level =2), U8s (n=2), U9s (n=1), U11s (n=6)). One coach worked with two different age groups. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used to replace the names of the participants.

Design and Procedure

Ethical approval was granted by the lead researcher's University Ethics Committee, which assured anonymity for the participants. The coaches were chosen using a purposive approach to ensure access to participants with the correct background (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2012), and were initially contacted via email correspondence (Appendix B1). Upon agreeing to partake in the study, a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B2) was provided, with all coaches completing a Generic Informed Consent Form (Appendix B3) and a Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent Form (Appendix B4). Once the study had ceased, participants were provided with a Participant De-Brief (Appendix B5). The lead researcher is a Level 3 football coach whose 'insider identity' within the English soccer coaching community enabled him to approach "gatekeepers" who facilitated access to the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Table 4.1 Participant Information Overview

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Experience	Coaching Qualifications	Age group	Employment
Tom	46 years	M	6 years	Unqualified	U11s	Outdoors and Wildlife Manager
Laura	38 years	F	2 years	Unqualified	U9s	Teaching Assistant
Mark	43 years	M	2 years	The FA Level 1 in Coaching Soccer Certificate	U11s	Solicitor
Timothy	38 years	M	6 years	The FA Level 1 and Level2 in Coaching Soccer Certificate; The FA YouthModules 1 and 2	U7sand U11s	Engineer
Clive	54 years	M	20 years	The FA Level 1 and Level2 in Coaching Soccer Certificate; The FA YouthModules 1 and 2	U11s	IT Manager
Stephen	42 years	M	4 years	The FA Level 1 in Coaching Soccer Certificate	U11s	Civil Servant
Greig	44 years	M	2 years	The FA Level 1 in Coaching Soccer Certificate	U8s	Marine Fireand Safety Manager
Paul	38 years	M	20 years	The FA Level 1 and Level2 in Coaching Soccer Certificate; The FA YouthModules 1 and 2	U8s	Accountant
Bill	39 years	M	18 years	The FA Level 1 in Coaching Soccer Certificate	U11s	Joiner
Dan	48 years	M	1 year	The FA Level 1 in Coaching Soccer Certificate	U7s	Support Worker

In terms of trying to understand the 'why' aspect of the way coaches' consider and implement their actions that appear within their coaching, semi-structured interviews were used due to the deep, rich data provided (Braun, & Clarke, 2019). When considering the timing of interviews, previous studies have used interviews to gain an understanding of coaches' behaviours, however, this has come retrospectively in the form of a follow up to systematic observations (Partington & Cushion, 2013). As a result, researchers have been limited to providing coaches with the opportunity to justify their coaching actions, rather than asking them to outline their coaching intentions. Thus, the coaches are not accountable for their on-field behaviours and underpinning philosophies but can offer philosophies that align to the delivered practice. With this methodological process in mind, researchers have been limited by providing the participants with the opportunity to justify their coaching actions, rather than outlining their coaching intentions and, therefore, the coaches are not accountable for their on-field behaviours and underpinning philosophies.

To begin to address this issue, "divorcing" practice from intention, two interviews took place that were non-practice related, neither pre- nor post-practice. Two interviews were used to achieve depth and were kept as separate entities. The aim of the interview process was to gain an initial insight into the axiological, ontological and epistemological considerations of those involved (See Appendix B6 for full Interview Schedule). The interviews were completed within a pre-booked meeting room within the university, or within the coaches' clubhouse, and lasted between 90 and 120 minutes (total interview time per participant). The coaches were given a flexible option for the location of the interview to facilitate the development of a positive relationship.

Taking a semi-structured approach to interviews allowed for a fluid and relaxed environment to be created as the interviewer planned the topics and areas to be discussed, rather than specific, constricting questions. Interviews provided an insight into grassroots soccer coaching that has yet to be fully examined and facilitated a conversational dialogue, in a similar manner to the ever-changing nature of coaching (Griffo, Jensen, Anthony, Baghurst & Kulinna, 2019). This approach allowed the interviewer to react to comments whilst also probing and exploring the information with great depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To ensure a thorough and comprehensive interview, probes were utilised to gain specific and detailed responses, and elicit greater depth of information by encouraging the interviewee to provide further response. Statements such as "Tell me more about that," or "What does that look like or feel like?", "So, you have mentioned what it's not, can you

explain what it is?". Using probes, the researcher can gain detail around specific examples which provide a level of richness to the findings by inviting greater detail from the interviewee (Priede, Jokinen, Ruuskanen, & Farrall, 2014). Further examples of probes utilised within the present study included 'What was the situation?', 'Why did you do that?' and 'How did others see it?'. To gain specific information this response was met with a probing question and the below passage:

Researcher: Tell me more about that.

Greig: Well, it is just the type of club I played at really. The coach expected us to act responsibly and to put our effort into everything we did, you know. I guessthat's why I ask my own group to work hard every session.

Researcher: So, what does that value, of hard work, look like in a practical sense,out on the pitch within your coaching?

Greig: Erm…well it's not walking while were playing, it's not passing on responsibility of who you are up against.

Researcher: So, you have mentioned what it's not, can you explain what it is?

Greig: I suppose my value of hard work is initially from myself as a coach, in terms of planning as best as I can and preparing the equipment. Then it's the wayI coach really, so like quite loud but supportive and energetic all the time. Thenit's down to the players in a way. Yeah, it's watching those participants track back when we lose the ball, or if your teammate is under pressure do your very best to get as close as you can to them or to give a passing option.

All interviews conducted were recorded on a digital voice recorder (Sony ICD-BX140 Digital Voice Recorder) and transcribed verbatim by the lead author, following a similar process undertaken (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An important aspect of sport coaching literature is the quality behind the examination of the raw data (Sparkes & Smith, 2009), hence the taking of a pragmatic approach to research as this allows the researcher to develop a subjective relationship with the participants and therefore develop understanding from the subjective experiences of individuals (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). With the intention of exploring gaps in the results, alongside possibly generating data and further insight, member checks were completed '…so that a meticulous, robust, and intellectually enriched understanding of the research might be further developed' (Smith & McGannon, 2017, p. 8). Furthermore, such reflections were completed in the hope of improving the accuracy and

credibility of the data collected (also known as respondent validation). All participants were asked to read the transcriptions of their interviews; however, no amendments nor additional constructions were requested. Furthermore, it was the aim of the researchers to reframe such checks as an opportunity to explore the varying insights held by the participants in order to further enhance the data collected (Smith & McGannon, 2017).

A criticism of the current empirical literature is that the work lacks depth and remains fundamentally superficial with limited questioning around philosophy (e.g. McCallister *et al*., 2000; Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Voight & Carroll, 2006). Therefore, the role of the semi-structured interview questions was to provide a framework to address the dearth of research which has not yet explored the deeply embedded and often implicit considerations of coaches.

During the first phase (interview one), each interview consisted of six sections. First, the interviews explored how the participants viewed their background and experiences in/of coaching, and then their values, morals and ethics (axiology). The following two sections focused on their beliefs about how knowledge is constructed and the nature of existence (ontology) along with their assumptions on learning, practice activities and coaching methods (epistemology) (Jones *et al*., 2004). Next, the interviews were directed towards coaching "philosophy", with the intent of gaining insight into the developmental process of each participant's philosophy along with the varying influences coaches may have. Finally, coaches were asked to provide an awareness of the practical implementation of a coaching philosophy. The second phase of interviewing occurred at a later date. This explored, in more detail, the answers provided by the coaches in their first interviews, with the intention of moving towards saturation in terms of data collection with the included participants.

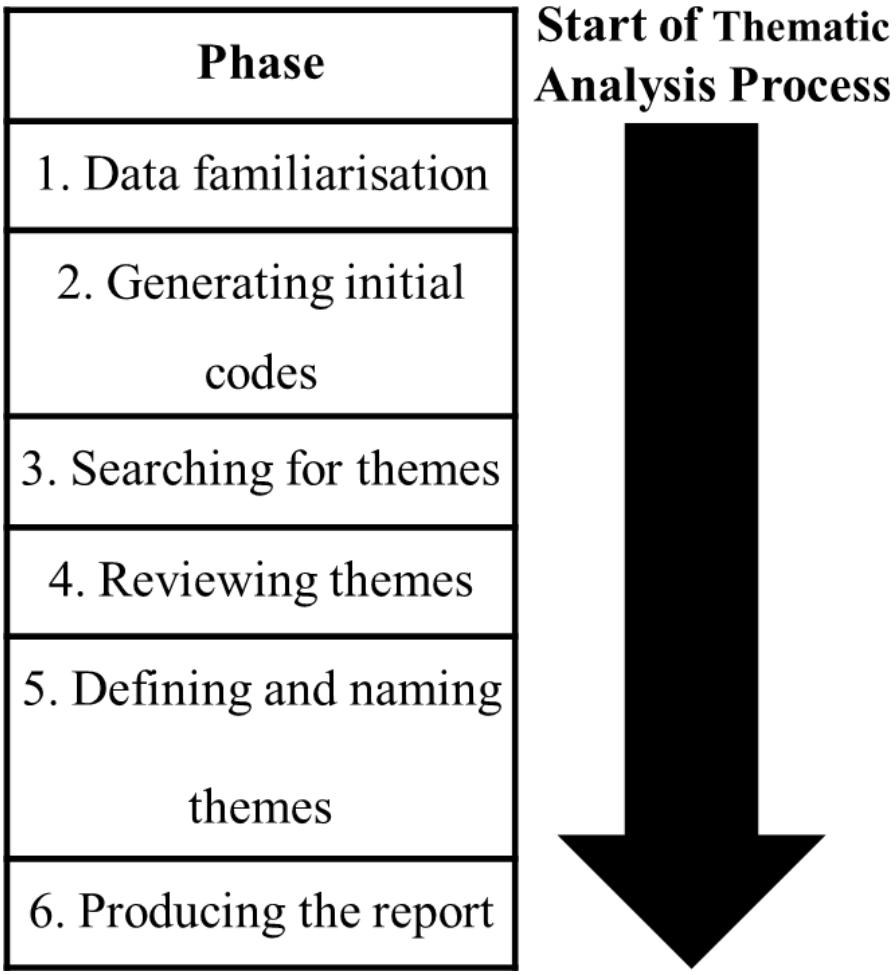
Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed *verbatim* by the lead author, and, upon completion, pseudonyms were allocated to ensure the participants anonymity. Next, a six-phase deductive thematic analysis took place (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

With qualitative analysis, researchers must be aware that the research guidelines are not strict rules to abide (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and instead can be applied in a flexible manner, with both the research question and the collected data being considered appropriately. Furthermore, thematic analysis and qualitative analysis in general should be recursive, with certain phases being re-examined, re-read and re-written over a longer period of time, with progress developing naturally (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As noted by Braun

and Clarke (2006), the stages of thematic analysis include: (1) *Data familiarisation*, (2) *Generating initial codes*, (3) *Searching for themes*, (4) *Reviewing themes*, (5) *Defining and naming themes* and (6) *Producing the report* (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)



When arriving at the data analysis stage of a research project after collecting data interactively, the researcher will have some prior knowledge of the data. Therefore, some accompanying initial thoughts and concepts about what may be found in the data will exist. This was evident in the present study with the researcher noting that the participants were generally knowledgeable regarding their philosophical foundations.

Phase One: Data Familiarisation

It is essential the researcher immerses themselves within the data and to ensure full immersion and a knowledge regarding both the breadth and depth of the content of the data was achieved, the lead author repeatedly read and re-read the transcripts. Whilst also actively looking for meanings and patterns, with ideas and potential themes being shaped by the

extensive reading undertaken (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although time consuming, such extensive re-reading is essential for developing familiarity with the data set. Upon completing the data collection, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the lead researcher, which enabled the beginning of the familiarisation process (Reissman, 1993). This ensured that the information from the transcripts was retained, as provided via the face-to-face interview (i.e. correct punctuation) (Poland, 2002).

Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

Upon completing an extensive familiarisation phase, the lead author then began to generate an initial list of ideas about the data set, before beginning the coding process. Codes were identified through interesting features of the data that appeared to contribute in a meaningful way towards the phenomena being examining (Boyatzis, 1998). The coding process is the beginning of the organisation and management of the data and will become the foundations of the broader themes (Tucker, 2005). Although coding software is available (e.g. Nvivo; Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008), in the present study coding was undertaken manually by the lead author.

Each transcript (n=10) was coded systematically with interesting aspects of the data being manually highlighted in the 'Tracker Comment' programme found within Microsoft Word. All codes were coded before being grouped together to begin to form a theme by being copied and pasted onto a separate computer file. The researcher inclusively coded the extracts of data to ensure context was not lost on the extract (Bryman, 2001).

Phase Three: Searching for Themes

Having completed the initial coding and collating of extracts from the data, the researcher began to re-focus the long list of identified codes into potential. To facilitate the effective organisation of the found codes into themes, the researcher used colour systems to match the quotes to the themes. At this stage the researcher considered the relationship between the themes found, breaking the categories into sub-categories and main, over-arching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase Four: Reviewing Themes

The fourth phase of the thematic analytical process involved the reviewing and confirming of the final thematic map of the analysis. Data themes were included after the lead author confirmed clear and identifiable distinctions between themes, along with their meaningful contribution to the present thesis. The review process consisted of the re-reading

of all included coded data extracts, with the researcher ensuring they appear in a logical and coherent order, with the second phase of the review process re-examining the entire data set to ensure the full saturation of extracted data. With the thematic map giving a holistic overview and representation of the data the researcher felt that further re-coding would not provide substantial findings, so the decision was made to stop as the researcher felt they had a good idea of what the different themes were, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data in line with the research question.

Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

Stage five involves the defining and refining of the main themes extracted from the data by identifying the underlying focus of each theme and determining what the theme captures with the researcher being simplistic in the terms used to avoid themes becoming to diverse and complex (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For each theme, a detailed analysis was undertaken, with the researcher taking time to identify the story being told by each respective theme. Each theme was considered individually and in relation to the other included themes. With the themes encompassing a variety of codes, sub-categories were developed to provide structure to complex themes. As the phase five process came to an end, the researcher had clearly defined each category, with working titles being given to each respective theme.

Phase Six: Producing the report

The final stage of thematic analysis was the write-up of the key findings. The lead researcher focused upon providing a concise, coherent, logical, and interesting account of the data found, telling a story through the carefully extracted themes and codes. Furthermore, trying to capture the focus of the points being made through the careful selection of examples from the data set. Trying to avoid providing an overview of the data, the researcher looked to intertwine examples found within the data with an analytical narrative, focused around the research question being investigated.

In order to make sense of the collected data, the above approach was undertaken which guided the researcher towards identifying meaning, issues and points of interest hidden in the data that has been collected (Brannen, 2017). Thematic analysis begins with the initial familiarisation of the data, interviews in the present investigations case, through transcription, and re-reading of the data by both researcher and coaches, before culminating in the reporting of patterns syphoned from the transcriptions. A fluid process, the analysis involves the researcher moving between phases, examining the full collected data set, the

smaller extracted codes of data and the analysis being produced by the researcher, with writing taking place throughout the six stages, beginning in the form of initial notes and ideals, concluding in a concise, informative report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).This process helped the researcher extract and understand the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of the grassroots coaches whilst also providing an opportunity to gather information regarding their past experiences and learning journeys (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Such an analysis tool was utilised as it facilitates theoretical flexibility and freedom (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Once exploration was completed upon the transcripts, deep and meaningful conclusions could be made (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The present study developed three main themes, with between two and six themes outlined as appropriate by previous research, (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

4.3 Results

Following analysis, this study developed three main themes, with between two and six themes required, as outlined in previous work (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The themes reflected how grassroots soccer coaches perceive their values and beliefs influence their practices (Table 4.3). The three themes include Core Values and Beliefs (Axiology and Ethics), The Purpose of Coaching (Ontology and Phenomenology) and Pedagogical Understanding and Knowledge (Epistemology).

Core Values and Beliefs (Axiology and Ethics)

The first theme focused on axiological concepts (what a coach values), and ethical considerations (what a coach judges as moral or immoral). The core values and beliefs held by the coaches included hard work, fun, enjoyment and positivity along with professionalism. The coaches outlined that such values shape their coaching behaviours and practices. The first core value highlighted by the coaches was hard work with Paul noting that he is '… someone who believes that you work hard for things, a very driven person and I believe that if you want to achieve something, you work as hard as you can for it.' Given such axiological insights, it could be suggested that Paul feels hard work will lead to the feeling of a successful coaching session. Timothy voiced a similar axiological standpoint as he has 'a lot of respect for people that work hard and I'm quite tenacious, quite determined.'

Table 4.3 Second Order Categories and Final Themes

Second Order Category	Final Themes
Core values and beliefs	Theme One Axiology and Ethics Core Values and Beliefs
Challenges and constraints	
Motivation to Coach	Theme Two Ontology and Phenomenology The Purpose of Coaching
Improve Performance	
Player and Team Development	
Creativity	
Outcome	
Life skills	
Inappropriate Coaching	
How children learn	Theme ThreeEpistemology Pedagogical Understanding and Knowledge
Coaching Delivery/ Learning Environment	
Reasoning for the use of coaching delivery /How do you know this is effective?	
How the coach learns best	

The second category to be established was fun, with many of the participants highlighting that fun and enjoyment was something that they looked to as a sign of an effective coaching session. As the soccer participants being coached included 5-11 year olds, both the moral and ethical considerations involved in planning and providing enjoyable sessions supported the ambition to develop participants' longevity in sport. Dan's axiological and ethical standpoint was highlighted when he commented:

> You've got to look after them and make sure that they are enjoying themselves,that is critical as if they are enjoying their football, this is the most important element. (Dan)

Timothy held similar values and further emphasised the importance of the participants coming to grassroots training and enjoying their participation in the sessions:

> At the year groups I work with, it's making [allowing] the kids to come and enjoy it, kids have been at school all week, they have got to come and have fun.(Timothy)

However, this positive view on ensuring the participants enjoy training sessions was not mirrored by every interviewee. Fun was not high on the agenda of Stephen who noted that:

> I think fun is something that you do at the fun fair. I don't know, fun to me meanslaughing and joking, messing about and isn't something I would associate with football. (Stephen)

Giving further thought to what Stephen considers as important within his coaching sessions, it can be suggested that he believes that high levels of structure and discipline are important to ensure what he would perceive as a successful coaching session. Such axiological viewpoints provide insights into the underpinnings of his practice; highly structured and repetitive practices would lead to minimal creativity and autonomy from the participants' perspectives.

A further theme was established concerning axiological and ethical considerations which was professionalism. Several coaches outlined that professionalism was very important to them, with associations made to the way they were dressed and presented. When considering the ever-developing professionalisation of coaching, the fact that voluntary grassroots coaches value such considerations leads to elements of excellent coaching practice, such as preparation:

> I get here 30 mins before everyone so I can set up so it's 'bang' and we are intoit. (Bill)

However, such professionalism also gives the impression that some of the coaches were more concerned about how they looked and were perceived by others rather than incorporating such ideals into their coaching philosophy and practice:

> We always look like coaches, with our tracksuit on with our initials so we look like we are there seriously to coach. (Mark)

Building on the theme of professionalism, Paul focused on the standards he looks to set within his group of participants. With a history of being a former professional football, Paul's statement gives an overview of his axiological standpoint, in that, he values punctuality and he ensures this translates into his coaching philosophy:

> Sometimes with those parents such as the ones who turned up late or turned up when they felt like it and I don't accept that. If you want to be late, you can't play here. You can't just turn up when you want, no that's not how it works withme. (Paul)

Such an approach could give the impression of immoral activities, given that the participants are too young to travel to the sessions alone and are therefore dependant on their guardians.

A coach like Paul with strict rules, may lead to the possibility of young participants being punished even when they are not directly responsible for their tardiness. In a similar view, Stephen notes that he expects those associated with his team to live up to his own standards. For example, "I'm prompt and I expect others to be prompt." Stephen goes on to note that:

> You can't have a kid who is repeatedly coming to a training session 10-15-minutes late because its disruptive to the group because you have to repeat instructions and it means the rest of the group are being hindered in their learningbecause you are having to catch some one up. If its repeatedly, that's when it becomes a problem and I might then say, 'Why are you late, again?'. I usually take it up with the player. (Stephen)

Before then admitting that he does not hold himself to the professionalism and standards he asks the participants to abide by:

> Having said that, sessions are meant to finish at 12pm but we are normally still going at 12:15pm so yeah, it is what it is. (Stephen)

It could be argued that Stephen is displaying an ideology that he has yet to incorporate fully into his axiology or philosophy due to the conflicting displays of standards discussed.

The Purpose of Coaching (Ontology and Phenomenology)

The second core theme to be highlighted focused on ontology (the meaning of coaching), and phenomenology (thoughts about the experience of being a coach). The findings highlight coaches' motivations to coach, how their colleagues perceive them, the importance of achievement such as success, winning and status and finally, development. One of the key motivations to coach included the coach facilitating '…the kids to have fun, good memories of their football coaching, just like I have of mine.' (Timothy). Additionally, Laura highlights that the reward of spending time with a team and her feeling of belonging are important. Alongside these factors, seeing the children develop is another reason that Laura gives for coaching. These motivations display a combination of her phenomenological and ontological viewpoints:

> You get that feeling of pride and your so chuffed about it and with the under 8sI got that 24 times because, you know, they were all sort of, they were all yoursand then I get a lot out of seeing them develop and I like to help… helping peoplemakes me feel good and they're just great kids to spend time. (Laura)

However, not all the coaches involved within the study felt reward from interacting with a group. Instead, Clive noted that the standard of player affected his motivation to coach as he could push them further, placing his personal enjoyment at the centre of his purpose for coaching rather than his participants:

> I enjoy it more if they're of a better ability and maybe that is a bit selfish, but you tend to get more out of it. (Clive)

The interviewees were asked to give their thoughts about how they felt coaches in the wider coaching community approached grassroots soccer. Responses indicated that when the interviewees were introduced to coaches whose philosophical considerations (ontology and phenomenology) did not align with their own, they saw this in a negative light:

> I've seen coaches put out a little warning to participants, intimidating them a bit.(Stephen)

> You do come across some where you can just tell that its results and ego. I mean,I hate to see, certainly at this age, a team that just boots the ball up the pitch to a strong striker, just to win a game. And every time the opposition are attacking, defenders just boot the ball out of play. I tell my lot, 'You have years to worry about results'. (Bill)

> There was one guy in particular, and he isn't a bad guy, and everyone was like 'He is always shouting at the kids'. (Dan)

For many coaches, ensuring that their participants develop efficiently ranks highly. However, given that sport is competitive in nature, coaches may prioritise result-based outcomes. Our grassroots coaches perceived that a desire to win was a conflicting feeling. This indicates that they feel the purpose of coaching (their ontological standpoint), is developmental rather than viewing success as a result of competitive outcomes:

> I know there's a couple of ours [coaching staff], me included, I'm incredibly competitive and sometimes I struggle to keep a bit of a lid on it. (Laura)

> It's tense, and I'm thinking, 'There's a minute to go here and we are 2-1 up', andsecretly you just sort of hope that you can hold on. (Clive)

Pedagogical Understanding and Knowledge (Epistemology)

The third theme to be developed from the transcripts focused on Epistemology, that is, the method for acquiring knowledge. This included how the coaches learn, how children learn, the way coaches deliver sessions, along with how the coaches' set effective learning environments.

When considering how children learn, some of the interviewees outlined that all children learn the same, through 'repetition'. This provided an insight into the pedagogical understandings of the coaches. Comments such as these raise questions around how the coaches got this 'knowledge' or understanding. Furthermore, what are National Governing Body (NGB) courses delivering and how can coaches pass awards with this level of awareness/understanding. Conclusions could be suggested that there is the possibility that

the participants may not be receiving bespoke support due to the epistemological stances of the coaches:

> If you've showed someone twice and they can't do it on the third time, they areeither not paying attention, something is going on, or they just don't want to doit, so that's how they learn. (Greig)

> Yeah, all of my group learn the same way. Certainly, since I've been here. I do make notes; I score them out of five on their passing and stuff like that. (Dan)

However, there were disagreements with some of the coaches highlighting that each child is an individual and should therefore be supported individually. Laura outlined her own epistemological standpoint through a story concerning how her participants learn differently and how she tried to support this:

> There are some who get what you're talking about straight away, but some you've got to be more sort of hands on, [pauses to think], and maybe a bit more [pauses to think] individually demonstrating what you're after, [pause]some of them pick it up far better when they are actually in a playing situation as opposedto on a less formal basis. Some, it might take a couple of weeks or a couple of months, but some might never get it, but you know, you have to try and recognisethat they aren't all going to immediately understand what you're after. (Laura)

Similar claims were supported by Paul who noted that each of his participants:

> …learns differently. Some are good at certain things and others, will learn by watching others. Some will like to do demonstrations, some are shy. Some learnoff [from] asking you questions and some of them will pick it straight up and [while] others take an age. (Paul)

When giving thought as to why different coaches hold differing epistemological views, Mark summed up saying that "I think it depends on how well educated the coaches are. Some aren't [well educated] and you see their sessions and you just think 'That is ridiculous'." This highlights the value Mark places on his pedagogical understanding and knowledge development (epistemology) through education.

A common thread in the sport coaching literature is the role of player centred coaching, that is, the provision of choice, experimentation and decision-making opportunities for the player. However, this style of coaching was rebutted by several of the interviewees:

> Most are at the level of where if they do try a flick or a step over there, they messit up. I say just 'Get the basics right' as it's no good trying things you can't do. (Tom)

> I would rather they kick it out than try to do something like a trick to get

out of trouble. (Stephen)

One of the coaches (Stephen) displayed conflicting epistemological views, noting that he doesn't '…want my left back to be doing flicks and tricks.' However, he then claims he provides an environment where his participants can be creative '…but it's up to them to make the decisions.' Such misaligned epistemological standpoints suggests a conflict in the development of practical activities that align with his philosophy which, in turn, is not conducive to participants' development. The findings provide advancement in sport coaching practice by providing an insight into the current understandings of grassroots soccer coaches and their philosophical viewpoints. Such data suggests that grassroots soccer coaches have misaligned philosophical concepts, compared to the intended outcomes of their coaching whilst also displaying minimal critical reflection with regards to their philosophical development.

4.4 Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the philosophical considerations within grassroots soccer coaches through an exploration of three core concepts. The study focused on: axiology (what a coach values), ontology (the meaning of coaching), and epistemology (the method for acquiring knowledge).

Not all grassroots coaches interviewed had a clearly identified philosophy, do not readily need a philosophical understanding (or overt philosophical stance) to be part of a grassroots soccer team (Horsley *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, an inexperienced coach who has yet to develop deep, philosophical thinking can deliver pedagogically accurate and complex sessions (Atkinson & Harvey, 2017). Nevertheless, fostering a philosophy can aid indecision making, structuring of coaching sessions, and the personal development of the coach to engage individuals and groups while coaching (Cushion, 2007); however, this wasnot placed highly in terms of what grassroots soccer coaches valued.

Axiology

Coaches at level two or below do not exhibit obvious awareness of core values (Nash *et al*., 2008). However, in contrast, our coaches actively discussed their values which included hard work, fun and positivity. Though, what was evident was an apparent disconnect between their discussions and their intended practice. It seems that an understanding of axiology might help grassroots coaches to develop a more consistent approach to their coaching. To lead the grassroots coaches towards a greater understanding of axiological concepts, coach educators should bring attention to what matters to said coach, with the aim of delivering philosophically aligned coaching practice (Nash *et al*., 2008).

Ensuring greater alignment between philosophy and practice requires greater depth in terms of how a coach enquires within their own axiological thinking (Partington & Cushion, 2013). However, our grassroots coaches were not necessarily forthcoming in placing their philosophic enquiry in terms of their role as coaches (Cushion & Partington 2014; Cushion *et al*., 2003). The importance of fun and enjoyment within grassroots coaching was, however, highlighted by a core element of our participants. However, this differed from the aims of an elite setting. For example, within academy environments, the core role of a coach was found to involve the communication of technical information to their participants (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Therefore, differing axiological standpoints are evident when the coaching content of grassroots is compared with academy (higher level) soccer.

With the intention of outlining elements of values and beliefs underpinning philosophy that were identified, the included coaches held core traits such as professionalism and hard work which give the impression that non-technical values are considered key. Furthermore, such axiological viewpoints indicate that a positive outcome from a training session that displays signs of professionalism and hard work could be considered a success (Horsley *et al*, 2015; Søvik *et al*., 2017). Research notes that practitioners focus on effort, tactical awareness and success (Cordes *et al*., 2012; Nash *et al*., 2008), rather than examining their philosophy and utilising reflections to develop their practice (Cassidy *et al*.,2009); which was present throughout the current study.

Ontology

Examining the ontological standpoints of our coaches provided insights into what was considered to be the purpose of the coaches and of coaching. First, the participants highlighted that their initial motivation to coach was due to their role as a parent, which brings into question their coaching priorities and prior knowledge base (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Nash *et al*., 2008).

Although several coaches in the present study outlined that they were not interested in winning, status or victories, they did note that focusing on the short-term goal of winning matches, leagues and ensuring promotions was something they struggled to avoid. In terms of the purpose of coaching, such struggles were further highlighted when coaches indicated that plans made in training for were ignored at times dependent on the present circumstance (e.g. leading a game they were not expected to win) (Harvey *et al*., 2013; Partington & Cushion, 2013). This displays a misalignment between grassroots coaches being developers

of positive learning experiences, compared with striving to achieve outcomes such as winning leagues. Building on this conflict, an opportunity is available for grassroots soccer coaches to operationalise ontological concepts, through the development of a clear philosophy. Underpinning behaviours and practices with clearly purposed values and beliefs may lead to the prioritising of age-appropriate outcomes (Cushion, 2013). As the implementation of a philosophy can be longitudinal, it may be unsurprising that coaches look to the immediate validation of success through winning matches and leagues. This contrast with the longer process of player development, while also focusing on coaching knowledge rather than the behaviours they display (Stodter & Cushion, 2019).

Epistemology

Past experiences provided the foundations to coaching behaviours now possessed by the coaches (Cushion, 2013). These experiences will have heavily impacted upon coaches' belief systems (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). Furthermore, some of the coaches noted minimal interested in formal coach education. This was evidenced by the lack of formal qualifications held or by coaches feeling forced to take mandatory courses. Our coaches did not value formal coach education, which aligns with previously undertaken research in the area and highlights the epistemological standpoints of the coaches (Cushion, 2013). Moreover, coaches in this study highlighted the role of colleagues and mentors with whom they held general discussions, sought advice, and developed practice ideas.

Such informal learning supports the notion that 'folk' pedagogies holds a greater presence in terms of coach development, rather than the theoretically underpinned continuous professional development or coaching courses available to coaches (Cushion, 2013). Alongside the passing of 'folk' pedagogy, additional challenges with regards to implementing philosophically driven coaching remains such as time constraints (Søvik, Tjomsland, Larsen, Samdal, & Wold, 2017) and the need for immediate validation through external success (Stodter & Cushion, 2019). Furthermore, due to a lack of criticality, coaches perceive their practices as successful, leading to the neglect of deep, reflection in terms of understanding their practice (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Such claims are further enforced by the results of a study of coaches within an English Premier League setting who found caring difficult, with regards to their philosophical development (Cronin, Knowles & Enright, 2019). What was evident within this study was the prioritisation of organisational aspects of coaching. In contrast, and similar to Cothran *et al.*,'s (2005) work, the development of philosophical considerations and the practical implementation of such considerations was neglected.

Given that limited studies have been conducted of grassroots foundation phase soccer, little was known of this environment. This chapter outlines that a level of structure is required when working with children in a grassroots setting compared to that of senior participants (Cronin *et al.*, 2019) or elite academies (Partington & Cushion, 2014). Providing elements of a holistic learning environment are required for effective learning to take place (Cassidy *et al*., 2009) but it could be argued that this is not evident among the practices of many coaches of this study. This is obvious from the noted use of technical practices, line drills and cues. In terms of their epistemological understandings, opportunities exist for grassroots soccer coaches to develop appropriate pedagogical approaches which are then applied to their practices. However, it should be noted that coaches may not feel comfortable setting such a learning environment (Ford *et al*., 2010). Perhaps the chaos associated with such a technique may lead to a fraught environment with which some grassroots coaches are not comfortable with.

4.5 Summary

It is apparent that the themes extracted in this study provide a new and unique insight into the context of grassroots soccer coaching at foundation level. It is clear from the findings that elements of philosophical underpinnings are evident within the coaches interviewed. However, what is more evident is that coaches lack understanding of how to effectively employ reflective practice to develop and implement that philosophy and help structure their coaching practices. The purpose of this study was to undertake a philosophical exploration of the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of soccer coaches who work with children aged 5 – 11 years in the UK. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten soccer coaches with the aim of exploring what are grassroots coaches understanding of coaching philosophy with regards to the shaping of their coaching practice. Data was analysed deductively, resulting in thirteen categories, of beliefs, values and opinions outlined by the grassroots coaches, being placed within the three main philosophical themes. Findings indicate that coaches take minimal time to consider their philosophical stance(s) with regards to selecting appropriate coaching methods when planning programmes. In contrast, coaches value input from mentors and colleagues over formal learning opportunities such as coach education courses and continuous professional development.

4.6 Conclusion

To conclude, the current study set out to achieve a philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer

coaches who are currently coaching within the foundation phase (under 5 – under 12 years) in soccer. By using qualitative, semi-structured interviews, rich, detailed, and complex accounts were gathered about how grassroots soccer coaches implement their values and beliefs into their practices. This deductive approach led to findings that the axiological viewpoint of grassroots coaches includes values such as hard work and professionalism. The ontological concepts held in high regards include to 'give back to the game' and the epistemological standpoints included a lack of interest in coach education, along with varying views on how participants learn best. What has been made clearer by the present study is the role 'folk' pedagogies play within coach learning, and such learning moments are considered as more valuable than formal qualifications or continuous professional development experiences.

When considering limitations of this study, it should be noted that only the perspectives of grassroots soccer coaches were presented. A more holistic understanding of grassroots soccer coaching may be achieved through triangulating findings with the opinions of coach educators, along with perspectives that co-exist within the area such as those of parents and assistant coaches. Further limitations can be noted with respect to the method of data collection employed. Interviews have their own limitations, including those of the interviewee(s) offering inappropriate information to please the interviewer or keeping information that may have shown the interviewee(s) in a negative light. A final limitation is that, despite the fact that the data collection was purposely divorced from practice, it would seem wise to analyse coaching practices for comparison with stated coaching beliefs. Such a study of foundation phase coaches in soccer would provide a unique opportunity to further develop the extant literature.

The findings have implications for the education of grassroots soccer coaches, sport coaching practitioners, coach educators, policy makers and key stakeholders (e.g. parents). What was clear throughout the study was that relevant and appropriate knowledge was held by some of the grassroots soccer coaches e.g. the participants ability to discuss age-appropriate coaching. Additionally, many of the coaches were able to note the role of the coach as a facilitator of creativity and innovation rather than a dictator of the participants' actions. These are positive results.

Useful areas for development would be challenging and changing the role of 'folk' pedagogy within grassroots soccer. These practices may be misaligned to The English FA's recommended techniques and is therefore an area that needs greater investigation. Engaging

coach educators from soccer's governing body may be worthwhile to develop an alternative narrative and ensure support for grassroots coaches in developed further.

CHAPTER FIVE

An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.

5.1 Introduction

When considering the coaching process, a core element requiring further investigation is the practice activities of youth coaches (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Cushion, Harvey, Muir & Nelson, 2012). Key drivers for coaching behaviour and subsequent practices have been outlined as a mixture of emulating other coaches, intuition, and traditional or 'folk' pedagogies (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Cushion, *et al*., 2003; Williams & Hodges, 2005; Ford, Yates, & Williams, 2010). Previous work contributing to the academic sport coaching literature has provided findings which identify coaches' qualities, shedding light on the importance of the context in which they work (e.g. working with a grassroots (participation) focus compared to working within an elite environment) (Cushion, 2007). An important aspect of coaching is the ability to develop those being worked with (Ford *et al*., 2010). Additionally, providing an effective and appropriate learning environment for the participants being coached (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Coaches' need to be adaptable in terms of the practice activities and behaviours displayed, given that coaching environments are ever-changing and unpredictable (Jones, 2009). The value of exploring coaches' practices provides a meaningful evaluation and understanding of what coaches do, which can facilitate the understanding of how coaches deliver coaching practice (Brewer & Jones, 2002). In addition, investigations of coaching practices provide answers as to why coaches undertake such practice in terms of considering their practical effectiveness along with their philosophical alignment (Partington & Cushion, 2013).

When considering previous research, findings indicate that coaches prefer more prescriptive techniques when coaching, with few exceptions (Ford *et al*., 2010). Within male soccer, instructional behaviours were found to be a common occurrence assumed by practicing coaches, in conjunction with praise and silence (Cushion & Jones, 2001). When examining other sports, participants spent time in prescriptive activities in their respective sports (e.g. wrestlers and figure skaters, Deakin & Cobley, 1998; cricket participants, Low *et al*., 2013). "Typical" behaviours have been outlined when considering the coaching role, such as feedback, correction and instruction along with session and environment management (Kahan, 1999). It should be noted that coaching practice varies with regards to the timings of behaviours and duration dependent on the context of the participants and

individual coach, (Hall *et al*., 2016; Potrac *et al*., 2007). An instructional approach to coaching has been found to be one of the most regularly used behaviours in a range of studies (e.g. Partington & Cushion, 2013; e.g. Miller, 1992; Millard, 1996; Kahan, 1999; Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2007; Ford *et al*., 2010). Given the context-specific nature of coaching (Potrac *et al*., 2000), research indicates that it would be inappropriate to transfer findings from one environment such as that of elite participants to a differing environment such as with grassroots level participants (Harvey, Cushion & Massa-Gonzalez, 2010). Due to the unpredictable and complex nature of coaching (Jones, 2009), practice is ever-changing through developing relationships, perceptions and language (Cushion, 2007). Coaches have the challenging task of balancing stakeholder relationships, administrative tasks, time-commitment, and continuous professional development in addition to the expectations that they be as professional as possible (Potrac *et al*., 2015).

A potential reason for such coaching practice has been linked to coaches need to appear competent and acceptable to those observing, such as key stakeholders (e.g. other coaches or parents). Such requirements lead to the transmission of traditional, potentially unscientific methods (e.g. folk pedagogy, Harvey *et al*., 2013). Therefore,creating a coach who may avoid educationally driven practices such as taking a game- centred approach to coaching, has been found to increase learning over the long term (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Traditionally recognised coaching methods (e.g. line drills and command/instructional style coaching) seem to be placed at the opposite end of the spectrum when compared to a coach taking the role of facilitator (e.g. game-based practices,participant autonomy) (Ford *et al*., 2010). This is despite the latter having been identified as being beneficial for player development (Law *et al.,* 2007). This approach provides opportunities for learning to take place implicitly (e.g. through silence), leading to greater responsibility and autonomy placed on participant learning (Smith & Cushion, 2006). To gain an insight into the realities of grassroots coaches' practices, exploring individuals withintheir personal day-to-day environment and surroundings will permit their personal interpretations, thoughts and feelings to emerge. (Partington & Cushion, 2013); leading to insights regarding how they use their knowledge to guide their actions (Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002; Smith & Cushion, 2006; Harvey *et al*., 2010).

Grassroots participants should be "…exposed to playing form activities" (Ford *et al*., 2010, p. 492) to provide autonomy and greater opportunities for learning. However, in soccer the most common used coaching behaviour has been identified as instruction (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford *et al*., 2010). These findings have been reinforced recently through research that highlighted the roles of coach-centred or direct approaches being practitioners'

most utilised tools (O'Conner, Larking & Williams, 2017; Cushion *et al*., 2012). Contrary to these results, Chambers and Vickers (2006) highlighted that the role of questioning by coaches provides problems for participants to overcome and, therefore positive learning environments are created. Such environments are further reinforced by the using of praise (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2002). It has been found that, when examined, practicing coaches tend to provide instruction on a more regular basis than questioning (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford *et al*., 2010; Partington & Cushion, 2013). With this inconsistency in mind, Partington *et al*. (2015) proposed that coaches were not aware of the coaching behaviours they exude or how often they are explicitly used. This suggests minimal self-awareness among the coaching fraternity (Harvey *et al*., 2013).

To develop greater levels of self-awareness and to develop as practitioners, coaches are required to critically evaluate their practice (Partington *et al*., 2015). It has been suggested that this can be accomplished by assessing how effective and engaging are the activities delivered. (Cote, Baker & Abernethy, 2007). When contemplating soccer (the sport presented in this study) coaches have been identified as delivering 'part-practice' activities which consist of prescriptive approaches such as unopposed, structured practices (Ford *et al*., 2010). Contrastingly, work by Williams and Ward (2007) noted that coaches who provides 'match-like' activities stimulate their participants more in terms of perceptual-cognitive functions along with motor skills. Furthermore, those taking a prescriptive approach to coaching limit those being worked with in terms of the opportunity to play autonomously. This poses challenges as problems that will have to be overcome individually, such as competitive fixtures, as the participants develop (Williams & Hodges, 2005). Therefore, coaches should expose participants to such environments to ensure the skills such as problem solving can be developed (Ford *et al*., 2010). Replicating competitive game situations has been noted as 'essential' for developing the skills needed for effective match play development (Ford *et al*., 2010). This can be facilitated through activities such as small-sided or conditioned games (e.g. Owen, Twist & Ford, 2004), with empirical findings being displayed across multiple sports such as cricket (e.g. Low *et al*., 2013), wrestling (Hodges & Stark, 2006) and gymnastics (Law *et al*., 2007). Thus, coaches can achieve the development of an effective learning environment through facilitation and questioning. Furthermore, this can also be achieved by adapting small-sided games and undertaking of in-game constraints, leading to the optimisation of learning (Vickery, Dascombe, Duffield, Kellet & Portus, 2013; Low *et al*., 2013).

When examining the nature of practice activities within elite level soccer, participants are provided with greater opportunities to train for games and match-like

scenarios, compared to those playing at a grassroots level (Ward, Hodges, Starkes & Williams, 2007). These practices provide a framework from which participants can learn whilst providing an opportunity to transfer learning moments from training to competitive situations (Ford *et al*, 2010). Such transferable moments highlight the value of game-based practices when delivered by coaches. Conflictingly to suggested best practice, more 'traditional' coaching activities have been favoured when looking to improve the competency of participants, with structured 'drill-type' approaches taken (Williams & Hodges, 2005). Participants are provided with high levels of repetition and feedback and this, combined with instruction from a coach, leads to an increase in skill (Williams & Hodges, 2005). However, such a structured environment can create an "…overload of information for learners, preventing them from engaging in the problem-solving process" (Ford *et al*., 2010, p. 485). Literature has found that coaches favour an instructional approach (Ford *et al*., 2010), with additional behaviours including praise, scold and questioning (Cushion & Jones, 2001). Furthermore, this approach (prescriptive) has been found to provide information that is easily forgotten, along with participants experiencing information overload (Hodges & Franks, 2004). Alternative approaches are advocated, such as coaches taking participant-led approaches (Ford *et al*., 2010). Previous investigations of coaches have shown that instructional approaches have been the practice-norm (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford *et al*., 2010). Therefore, a fair assertion would be to acknowledge that coaching practitioners may not have progressed at the same speed as scholars, highlighting a practitioner-scholarship gap.

Highlighted within the coaching practice literature (Cope *et al*., 2016), is the importance of systematic observation as the coaching process requires objective evaluation, and interpretation, of coaching practice. When giving thought to the methods associated with studies of coaching practice, systematic observation is a key tool. This method is a mixed-method approach to record the actions of a coach (Kahan, 1999; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004a; Cope *et al*., 2016). Various generic observational tools exist (e.g. Arizona State University Observation Instrument - ASUOI), however, they do not possess all coaching behaviours (Smith & Cushion, 2006). The Coach Analysis Intervention System (CAIS) (Cushion *et al*., 2012), was utilised within the present works. The CAIS tool is broken categories into more detailed behaviours such as the type of questioning employed (e.g. convergent or divergent), whilst also providing an opportunity for the observer to record the types of practice activities, such as playing form or training form (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Prior to beginning the data collection phase, a five-step validation process was completed (Brewer & Jones, 2002; Cushion *et al*., 2011; Partington & Cushion, 2013), which included: (1) a four week training

period which provided the user with an opportunity to learn how to implement the tool whilst also providing the development of understanding with regards to the behavioural categories (Lacy & Darst, 1989); (2) instrument modification, to ensure content validity as contextually relevant behavioural categories and time analysis of practice activities were adapted from the CAIS for the hand notion instrument (Vogts, 1999); (3) processes concerned with obtaining logical or face validity of the instrument (Vogts, 1999), (4) Inter-rater reliability testing to obtain reliability with the behavioural classifications and time analysis of practice activities (Lacy & Darst, 1989); and (5) test–retest reliability (Lacy & Darst, 1989). However, sports specific tools are available as well, such as Rugby Union (RUCOI, Brewer & Jones, 2002). Taking a systematic observational approach to data collection provides researchers with the unique opportunity of gaining an awareness into the practical realities of a coaches practice. Such insights will the inform practical recommendations with a view of developing coaching practice (Potrac *et al*., 2007).

Limitations of undertaking systematic observations include getting close enough to the coaches to appreciate their interactions, being present to see and hear transactions. Often not observing the preceding or post intervention behaviours due to note taking cause distraction, given the subjective judgements as to where to locate behaviours (Preciado, Anguera, Olarte, & Lapresa, 2019). The literature has examined coaches within the context of the training environment rather than in a match scenario (Smith & Cushion, 2006). Partington and Cushion, (2013) highlighted that even among specific sports or domains, the ability for researchers to draw comparison is very limited due to effectiveness not being tied to the frequency of certain behaviours (Abraham & Collins, 1998). Furthermore, there is a shortage of literature that has systematically observed grassroots coaches, and more specifically within the sport of soccer.

A technological approach to data collection was chosen for a variety of reasons, rather than hand notations being utilised. Firstly, the recorded footage provided permanent data of the coach and their practice, allowing the lead researcher to review the footage on numerous occasions, developing the accuracy and validity of the study (Partington & Cushion, 2015). Secondly, filming the coach in action provided the researcher with the opportunity to continuously record data. This is compared to the acknowledged limitation of hand notes which outlines the fatigue researchers may endure and be therefore required to rest and recover before continuing with the process. A third reason was the opportunity provided to the researcher in the form of facilitating an unobtrusive environment by placing the camera away from coaches, which also allowed a familiarity to the training sessions, for

both the participants and coaches involved. It is vital to outline that at this level of sport, a camera filming coaches working within the Foundation Phase is an anomaly, and therefore, the researchers spent time building rapport with key stakeholders (coaches, parents and participants) prior to the beginning of filming. This was to limit the opportunity for participant reactivity due to the alien environment in which the coaches, parents and participants were placed in during the filmed sessions (Payne & Payne, 2004).

Scholars have acknowledged that gaining an understanding of the effective implementation of a coaching philosophy should be context or situation dependent, with the context being the level at which coaches' coach (Hall *et al*., 2016). It has been suggested that soccer coaches may be reluctant and therefore less likely to change established (prescriptive) practice (Partington *et al*., 2015), and instead continue to deliver a 'tried-and-tested' prescriptive model (Cushion *et al*., 2012; Potrac *et al*., 2007).

The present study aims to contribute to the extant literature of coaching practice by investigating grassroots soccer coaches. More specifically, this study will be conducted through the lens of grassroots coaches, as the English FA's Foundation Phase (5-12 years) lacks depth (Cope *et al*., 2016; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Kahan, 1999). Although studies have examined professional youth academy coaches (e.g. Partington *et al*., 2015) and participation youth coaches (e.g. O'Connor *et al*., 2017), limited research has examined coaches working with 5-12 year olds in a grassroots soccer context. A situation that Potrac *et al* (2015) found 'surprising' was the dearth of research with a grassroots soccer focus. These roles remain voluntary with many coaches holding high levels of responsibility to deliver excellent experiences to those they are working with which deserves greater focus (Lusted & Gorman, 2010). This demand on coaches has been acknowledged by Green & Houlihan (2006) who added that coaches are scrutinised by key stakeholders regarding their professional practices and standards, whilst dealing with the high workload associated (time commitment, administration, planning etc.). Therefore, knowing so little about the experiences, understandings and practices of grassroots soccer coaches highlights a gap within the extant literature that would be usefully addressed, enabling the body of work to become "more" complete. Examining what coaching behaviours are evident within grassroots soccer provides an opportunity to create a dialogue around which coach education, coach educators, and practices may need addressing. Insights such as these then inform practical recommendations with a view of developing coaching practice (Potrac *et al*., 2007). As such, this study aimed to use a mixed method approach to research, combiningquantitative and qualitative methodologies. This was to effectively capture and interpret thepractices and behaviours of grassroots coaches. The intention of this process was to examine the structures

and behaviours utilised within the setting. Systematic observations were employed to gain an insight into understanding how coaches deliver sessions within a grassroots setting. This study intends to answer the following research question:

> RQ2: What coaching behaviours are evident within grassroots soccer coaching practice?

5.2 Method

A mixed method approach was taken insofar of the using of systematic observation, alongside a quantitative numerical analysis. When considering the qualitative element of the study, researchers extol the virtues of observations through rich descriptions of the research. However, to filter the bias and side-step the familiar and known to the researcher, quantitative analysis provides an opportunity to quantify behaviours and practice activities, and other variables leading to a more holistic enquiry (Smith & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). A combination of visual interpretation, in conjunction with an enumerative component in the analysis that indicates trends, provides researchers with an unbiased and educated view of the findings, leading to the possible uncovering of unexpected or unanticipated phenomena (Smith & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). Requiring prolonged stints of field work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in combination with the researcher's ability (i.e., investigation validity; Kvale, 1995), observational procedures can lead to organised researching. However, this approach displays minimal signs of the complex realities of sports coaching. Yet given the heightened levels of awareness through qualitatively describing trends of the analysis, this leads to a more fluid approach to researching, mirroring the world coaches facedaily, leading to greater ontological authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Participants

For the purpose of this study, the coaches being examined were coaching within the English FA and English Premier League Foundation Phase (i.e. participants under seven years of age up to those under 12 years of age), at a grassroots level. Coaching took place between 60 – 120 minutes per week, with a competitive match during the weekend. The coaching teams within which the participant coaches worked included a 'Head Coach/Manager' and an occasional 'Helper'. The young participants involved would predominately train between the hours of 5pm and 8pm, after previously completing a day at school.

Participants met the following inclusion criteria:

They held the maximum of a Level Two in Soccer Coaching qualification (no formal coaching qualification and Level One in Soccer Coaching were both accepted).

They were active coaches within the Foundation Phase (between the ages of under 5years up to under 12 years),

They had a minimum of one-year (12 months) coaching experience along with no previous (or current) professional coaching involvement.

As can be seen in Table 4.2 (see previous chapter), the members of staff included (F=1, M=7), who were volunteers, held a range of differing backgrounds and careers including an Outdoors and Wildlife Manager, a Teaching Assistant, a Solicitor, an Engineer, an IT Manager, a Civil Servant, a Marine Fire and Safety Manager and an Accountant. Data was collected mid-to-end of season (January to May). The coaches and participants generally interact circa 2-4 hours per week, consisting of one training session and one competitive match. Training was focused on rather than competitive fixtures, as matches provide fewer coachable moments (Trudel, Côté & Bernard, 1996).

Design and Procedure

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Northumbria Ethics Committee and a sample of eight grassroots level coaches were chosen using a purposive approach to ensure access to knowledgeable people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2012), and initially contacted via email (Appendix C1). Upon agreeing to partake in the study, a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C2) was provided, with all coaches and parents completing a Generic Informed Consent Form (Appendix C3) and a Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent Form (Appendix C4). Additionally, due to the age groups of the participants' being coached, and consequently filmed, an Assent Form for Children was also completed (Appendix C5). Once the study had ceased, participants were provided with a Participant De-Brief (Appendix C6). The researcher is a level three football coach whose "insider identity" within the English coaching community enabled him to approach "gatekeepers" who helped facilitate access to the coaches (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Informed consent was granted by each of the coaches and their anonymity has been maintained through the use of pseudonyms. A methodology associated with the analysis of coaching practice is that of systematic observation. This approach facilitates the recording and analysing of the actions of a coach and has been prominent in the field of sport coaching (Kahan, 1999; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Cope, *et al*., 2016). This approach to data collection provides researchers with

the unique opportunity of gaining an insight into the practical realities of acoaches practice.

Each coach was filmed using a high-definition, digital video camera (Sony CX405 Handycam with Exmor R CMOS Sensor, HD 1080p, 2.29MP, 30x Optical Zoom, 2.7" LCD Screen, Black), placed on a mobile camera mount. All of the included coaches coached within different grassroots clubs and therefore different locations in the North East, of England. As with the varying locations, the placement of the video recorder varied, not only due to location but also due to the physical placement of the coach, coaching intervention taking place and coaching practice being delivered. This flexibility allowed the researcher to capture each coaches' behaviours within the context of the training sessions. In other words, the researcher captured naturally how the sessions happened, with the participants and additional coaches who took part. To ensure the simultaneous recording of the coaches' movements and audio coaching, a microphone (Sennheiser EW100 G2 Transmitter and Receiver Bodypack) was worn and transmitted to a receiver which was plugged into the recording camera. Weather conditions varied throughout the data collection period (January – May 2017), however this did not prevent a total of 2800 min of behavioural observation data being recorded. Brewer and Jones (2002) concluded that 270.0 min would be required for investigators to view the full code of coach behaviours, which was comprehensively achieved and surpassed.

Systematic Observation Process

To gain a deep understanding of the coaching practice of grassroots soccer coaches, a systematic observational approach was taken to observe the delivery of the coaches within their own coaching environments. Taking this approach to research has been the building blocks of coaching research (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Abraham & Collins, 2011). Furthermore, facilitating the observation of a coach and their practice within an environment they are usedto provides the opportunity to objectively evaluate the coach. This also offers an opportunity to examine the coaching process which has been outlined as essential to developing this areaof sport coaching research (Cushion *et al*., 2012).

Coaches were filmed over a period of six hours per coach to provide raw data to analyse. The reasoning for the collection of raw data through video recordings during grassroots soccer training sessions was completed for numerous reasons. Compared to hand notations, the recording of coaches' practice provided a permanent resource which allowed the footage to be viewed on multiple occasions to aid with accurate analysis (Morgan *et al*., 2014). Additionally, when considering the practicalities of hand notations compared to video

recording (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2007), the latter does not need observer rest and can therefore be viewed continuously. This approach allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the coaching session without the distraction of making hand notations. Furthermore, within these additional observations, further field notes were made, which would not have been possible if a differing approach was taken. An additional reason for the choice of data collection was the ability to position the camera and the researcher in differing areas of the training facility. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain differing viewpoints of the sessions, but also to engage with the coaches and participants to ensure that the aforementioned were not distracted by the camera or the researcher's presence (Darst, Zakrajsek & Mancini, 1989).

The instrument used to analyse the present study was the Coaching Analysis Intervention System (CAIS) (Brewer & Jones, 2002). The tool, which has been used in recent coach behaviour studies (Partington & Cushion, 2013), was examined initially using Brewer and Jones' (2002) five-step validation process. Firstly, the lead researcher became familiarised with the CAIS instrument and the accompanying categories. This was in line with the suggested four-week period (Lacy & Darst, 1989), and focused on using video footage of coaches, with recommended gaps between practice to account for memory lapse (of 24 hours, seven days and 14 days) (Lacy and Darst, 1989). No grassroots soccer coaching footage was available, so the researcher was supplied with footage of a coach from a youth development phase rugby setting. As the coaching behaviours would not differ greatly between the two contexts (grassroots and youth development) in terms of the rate at which they were displayed, this practice is not considered a limitation of the present study. As noted by Siedentop and Tannehill (2000), the researcher graduated from the initial familiarisation phase upon the mean retest agreements, which exceeded 80%. Lacy and Darst(1989) noted that due to 'use of name', commonly accompanying the coaching behaviour, this would leave to the distorting of the true percentages and therefore the use of name was excluded from the study.

The second step instrument modification included ensuring content validity as contextually relevant behavioural categories and time analysis of practice activities (Vogts, 1999). Thirdly, the next step included facevalidity which was the reviewing of categories and definitions to ensure representation of grassroots coaching. This was undertaken by a highly qualified coach practitioner and an experienced researcher who had previous involvements of working within the context of thestudy and with the analysis tool. In steps four and five inter-observer, and intra-observer, reliability was calculated which provided a level of consistency when recording behaviours

using the CAIS tool. Inter-observer reliability was completed and refers to statistical measurements that determine how similar the data collected by different observers (Cushion& Jones, 2001). This was checked at two intervals by the lead supervisor through the research process. Intra-observer reliability was also completed and refers to the stability of an individual's observation of phenomenon at two or more intervals of time. The CAIS practice state and coach behaviour categories, including definitions of the Coach Intervention and Analysis System (CAIS), can be seen in Table 5.1.

Giving focus to the on-field activities, all training sessions involving the eight participants were filmed and recorded. As each individual participant was located at their own club's training ground, the recordings locations were varied as were the placements ofthe camera set up. However, what was consistent across all of the venues was that the camerawas always positioned with the intention of capturing the coaching behaviours and practicesof the coach along with the interactions of those they were coaching in the most effective way possible. In addition to being filmed, each coach was fitted with a wireless (clip- mounted) microphone, which transmitted to the received located on the camera, leading to the simultaneous recording of both visual and audible behaviours.

In total, video footage of 2800 minutes of coaching behaviours and activities were recorded and analysed in alignment with the categories described previously within the CAIS tool. The data collected was analysed with Dartfish (Video Performance and Data Analysis Solutions) computer software, in combination with the CAIS coaching behaviour categories. Utilising Dartfish enabled the researcher to check for accuracy throughout the coding process, whilst also allowing the researcher to return to the selected video and reviewfurther. Moreover, following the procedures outlined by Ford *et al.* (2010), intra-observer and inter-observer checks were carried out with a researcher experienced in observational analysis. Mean inter-observer agreement (Event 80.0%, Interval 81.0%) and intra-observer agreement (Event 82.0%, Interval 87.0%) with the modified instrument met or exceeded theaccepted level of 80.0% (Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000). Furthermore, mean inter-observer (99.0%) and intra-observer (99.0%) reliability suggested a level of congruence in the time- use analysis (Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000). The process undertaken within this study included a trained observer utilising a range of procedures and guidelines to firstly observe, record, and finally analyse events and behaviours (Franks, Hodges & More, 2001).

Table 5.1 State and behaviour categories including definitions of the Coach Intervention and Analysis System (CAIS).

State - Training Form	Definition
Fitness	Improving fitness aspects of the game (e.g. warm-up, cool down, conditioning, rest)
Technical	Isolated technical skills unopposed alone or in a group
Skills	Re-enacting isolated simulated game incidents with or without focus on particular technical skills
State – Playing Form	**Definition**
Small-sided Game	Match-play with reduced number of participants and two goals.
Phase of Play	Uni-directional match play towards one goal.
Conditioned Game	As small-sided games, but with variations to rules, goals, or areas of play (e.g. possession/ball retention onlygames, or teams scoring by dribbling across end-line).
Discrete Behaviour	**Definition**
Positive Modelling	A demonstration of the correct performance of a skill or playing technique.
Negative Modelling	A demonstration of the incorrect performance of a skill or playing technique.
Physical Assistance	Physically moving the player's body to the proper position or through the correct range of a motion of a skill.
Specific Feedback - positive	Specific Feedback from the coach that is positive.

Specific Feedback - negative	Specific Feedback from the coach that is negative.
General Feedback - positive	General Feedback from the coach that is positive.
General Feedback - negative	General Feedback from the coach that is positive.
Corrective Feedback	Feedback from the coach that corrects an action or technique.

Instruction	Cues, reminders, prompts.
Humor	Jokes or content designed to make participants laugh or smile.
Hustle	Verbal statements intended to intensify the efforts of the player(s).
Praise	Verbal or nonverbal compliments, statements, or signs of acceptance.
Punishment	Specific punishment following a mistake.
Scold	Verbal or nonverbal behaviours related to the organizational details of practice sessions not referring tostrategies or fundamentals of the sport.
Un-codable	Any behaviour that cannot be seen or heard, does not fit into the above categories: checking injures, jokingwith player, being absent from the practice setting, or talking with bystanders.
Silence	Periods of time when the subject is not talking, when listening to a player or monitoring activities.
Question	Any question to the player(s) concerning strategies, techniques, assignments, and so forth associated with thesport: Convergent and Divergent.
Convergent	Limited number of correct answers/options – closer.
Divergent	Multiple responses/options – more open.

Data Analysis

The time each coach spent within each of the varying activity forms, along with the micro- versions of the forms, were calculated as percentages. Next, overall totals, percentages, standard deviation and ranks for each coaching behaviour were calculated for each of the 48 training sessions observed and recorded. Recent studies have advocated the use of percentagesin coach behaviour studies as a more reliable variable than frequency data (e.g. Hall *et al*., 2016; Partington & Cushion, 2013; Potrac *et al*., 2002; Potrac *et al*., 2007; Smith & Cushion, 2006).

Data was analysed descriptively and comparatively using Microsoft Excel; with significance being set at $P<0.05$ unless otherwise stated. Two core tests were completed, including a Z-Test and ANOVA test, alongside descriptive analysis. Firstly, the Z-test was completed with the intention of determining whether a statistically significant difference was identified between the mean outcomes, with dependant and independent variables considered. The dependent variables refer to those being either measure or tested within a piece of researchor an experiment. An independent variable is controlled or changed in a scientific experiment to test its effect on the dependent variable (Brannen, 2017). In the case of this study, this was focused on coaching behaviours instruction and questioning (dependant variables) and the coaches (independent variables).

The second statistical analysis completed was a One-Way ANOVA. This type of ANOVA is used to compare the coaches' behaviours against each other. The ANOVA test focuses on the variances between coaches. (Brannen, 2017). Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA was completed with the aim of comparing the coaches performing more than one task, in the case of our work this refers to their coaching behaviours.

5.3 Results

A total of 33,678 recorded behaviours were displayed by the coaches participating within the study (see Appendix C7). Results outlined a total of 2800 minutes of practice (see Table 5.2). This study's highest behaviour was allocated against was direct management (M=108, SD=180.9), with indirect management the second highest behaviour (M=49, SD=146.2). As noted within previous research (Smith & Cushion, 2006; Potrac *et al*., 2007; Ford *et al*., 2010),instruction was highlighted as the largest combined percentage, however within the present study instruction was the third placed behaviour (M=46.4, SD=155.6), with praise (M=36.9, SD=98.5) and questioning (M=29.3, SD=93.6) completing the top five behaviours displayed through the data analysis process. With ambitions of ensuring a rigorous coding

process, bothinter- and intra-observer checks were completed with both the mean inter-observer agreement(Event 81.0%) and inter-observer agreement (Event 82.0%) exceeding the accepted 80.0% similarity (Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000), across two observations.

Playing States was the category most frequently observed totalling 1144 minutes (41%of total time). Practice States was the second most frequently used category (994 minutes; 35%), with Other States being third (659 minutes; 24%). The findings display that during the present study there was only a difference of 6% between the practice and playing states deployed by the coaches. This show that within the present study findings display similarities to those made by Partington and Cushion (2013). The aforementioned found, within their study of professional youth coaches within soccer, that 53% of their coaching activities represented practice states (training form) and 47% represented when the coaches spent time in playing states (playing form). The present study represents a decreased difference between the two states when compared to previous research, with findings noting that 65% was spent in practicestates and 35% spent in playing states (Ford *et al.,* 2010). There was a total recorded activity time of 46 hours 39 minutes and 15 seconds delivered by the eight participants included withinthe study. Averaged out across the eight coaches includes circa 58-59 minutes per session per coach. The total duration of the "practice states" within the training sessions was 16 hours 4 minutes and 25 seconds, which is circa 20 mins per session per coach. Additionally, "practicestates" included on average 10 hours 39 minutes and 5 seconds of technical practice (13-14 mins per session per coach), 5 hours 27 minutes and 55 seconds of skills practice (6-7 mins persession per coach), 15 minutes and 10 seconds of functional practice (>1 min per session per coach) and 11 minutes 55 seconds of physiological practice (>1 min per session per coach); however, no fitness activity was undertaken. Additionally, the total duration of the "playing states" within the training sessions was 19 hours 4 minutes and 25 seconds; averaged out acrossthe 8 coaches includes circa 23-24 minutes per session per coach. Broken down, the "playing states" included 2 hours 15 minutes and 35 seconds of phase of play (2-3 mins per session percoach), 4 hours 21 minutes and 55 seconds of possession games (5-6 mins per session per coach), and 12 hours 26 minutes and 55 seconds of small-sided games (15-16 mins per sessionper coach); however no conditioned or full-sided games were delivered by the coaches. Finally,when considering "other states", a total of 10 hours 59 minutes and 45 seconds whenconsidering management/transitional periods was evident within the observed sessions which is circa 13-14 mins per session per coach. Given the outlined portions of each of the coaches training sessions, it is therefore apparent that each session compromised of 54% play form activities (playing states) and 46% training form activities (practice states). The durations of each sub-activity type during every training session

for the whole of the filmed observations are displayed in Table 5.2. What is also evident with the figure is the variance in total durationalong with the differing individual activities of each coach across each of their circa six hours of recorded sessions.

Table 5.2 Total states used by the coaches in-practice (Practice States, Playing States, Other States).

Practice States	**Total**
Physiological	00:11:55
Technical Practice	10:39:05
Skills Practice	05:27:55
Functional Practice	00:15:10
Total	16:34:05
Playing States	**Total**
Phase of Play	02:15:35
Possession Game	04:21:55
Conditioned Game	00:00:00
Small Sided Game	12:26:55
Full Sided Game	00:00:00
Total	19:04:25
Other States	**Total**
Management / Transition	10:59:45
Total	10:59:45
Overall Total	46.39.15

A total of 17,620 event (Recipient, Timing and Content -silence) and 33,678 interval behaviours (Coaching Behaviours) were coded from 46 hours 39 mins and 15 secs of video recordings. Overall, the most frequent behaviours type was Management - Direct (13.4%), with Management - Indirect (6.1%), Instruction (5.9%), Praise (4.6%) and Questioning (3.7%) completing the top five most frequent coaching behaviours recorded across the study. The least common coaching behaviours displayed by the eight coaches included Physical Assistance (0.07%), Humour (0.09%), Punishment (0.1%), Scold and Specific Feedback - Negative (0.2%) and Specific Feedback - Positive (0.3%). When considering the participant receiving the information or coaching from the lead trainer, a full breakdown can be seen within Table 5.3). 48% focused on the team, secondly 28% focused on the individual participant, thirdly 16% focused on the whole group and fourthly 8% delivered to a differing participant (e.g. Assistant). Upon reflection, gaining an understanding of coaches' behaviours which directly affected their activities led to the focusing on instruction and questioning.

Table 5.3 Total specific behaviours used by the coaches in-practice [total behaviours, percentage of behaviours (mean) and standard deviation (SD).

	Total Behaviours	**%**	**StandardDeviation**
Behaviour	**Total**	**Total**	**Total**
01. Positive Modelling	436	10.52	51.22
02. Negative Modelling	268	6.38	38.25
03. Physical Assistance	23	0.57	5.95
04. Specific Feedback - positive	93	2.24	7.44
05. Specific Feedback - negative	77	1.84	6.54
06. General Feedback - positive	601	14.38	59.03
07. General Feedback - negative	533	12.60	79.27
08. Corrective Feedback	120	2.91	18.56
09. Instruction	1974	46.39	155.62
10. Humour	30	0.71	5.32
11. Hustle	1230	29.58	104.13
12. Praise	1533	36.92	98.51
13. Punishment	52	1.21	8.17
14. Scold	77	1.79	3.76
15. Uncodable	0	0.00	0.00
16. Silence	16163	383.69	402.23
16a. On task	*14986*	*740.95*	*398.54*
16b. Off task	*1177*	*59.05*	*106.83*
17. Question	1248	29.285	93.60
17a. Convergent	*1032*	*700.16*	*76.79*
17b. Divergent	*216*	*99.84*	*27.04*
18. Response to a question	820	19.31	65.89
19. Management - direct	4540	108.00	180.94
20. Management - indirect	2061	48.99	146.19
21. Management - criticisms	0	0.00	0.00
22. Verbal Protocol Analysis	0	0.00	0.00
23. Confer with Assistants	1186	28.17	87.11
24. Player / Official Talk	613	14.52	56.86

Within the completed data analysis, instruction was the largest single behaviour. Such findingshave also been found across previous soccer bases systematic observational studies (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2002, 2007; Ford *et al*., 2010). Upon completing the z-Test analysis, Instruction had a larger mean (246.75) compared to another prevalent coaching behaviour; questioning (156). The is z Critical one-tail test, therefore the rejection region is any z-test value greater than the critical z value for a one-tailed test with a known variance of = 0.05. The critical value for one-tailed z-test at alpha = .05 is 1.645. Our z-test result is 1.64, which is considered small. As 1.64 is lower than 1.645 the result of the z test is outside of the rejection region. Therefore, the z-test does not show a significant result (See Table 5.4).

Considering the z Critical two-tail the rejection regions are denoted by + or – 1.96. The criticalvalues for a two-tailed z-test are: 0.05 +/- 1.96. Our z-test result is 1.96. This is within the rejection region. Therefore, this result displays a significant difference. We can therefore conclude that there is a significant difference between the use of instruction and questioning within grassroots soccer coaching.

Table 5.4 z-Test: Two sample for means between instruction and questioning.

	09. Instruction	**17. Question**
Mean	246.75	156.00
Known Variance	0.05	0.05
Observations	8.00	8.00
z	811.69	
z Critical one-tail	1.64	
z Critical two-tail	1.96	

A one-way ANOVA was undertaking to compare coaching behaviours of the eight coaches included within the present study. The text was completed with the intention of finding out whether there was a significant difference in terms of the coaches' behaviours. The F-test is 1.01. The cut-off value is 7.00. As our test value (1.01) is lower than the cut-off value (7.00) we must conclude that there is no significant difference between the coaches included within the study in terms of their coaching behaviours (See Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 One Way ANOVA comparing coach behaviours.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	0.00	7.00	0.00	1.01	0.45	2.49
Columns	0.02	3.00	0.01	15.05	0.00	3.07
Error	0.01	21.00	0.00			
Total	0.03	31.00				

When considering timing the majority of coaching behaviours were found to be post activity (42%) (See Table 5.6 for full breakdown). The second largest amount of coaching behavioursfound to be pre activity (37%) and finally, concurrent was the remaining third (21%). Givingthought to the varying content delivered by the participants within the present study, other wasthe largest proportion found within the recordings (62%), technical was the second largest (24%) and tactical was the third (14%).

Table 5.6 Total specific relating to Recipient, Timing and Content.

TOTAL	**33678**	**800.00**	**550.90**
Recipient (-silence)			
Individual	4950	224.18	303.96
Group	2842	128.95	249.52
Team	8464	389.83	353.03
Other	1364	57.04	116.33
TOTAL	**17620**	**800.00**	**446.01**
Timing (-silence)			
Pre	6425	291.02	223.96
Concurrent	3815	173.85	211.51
Post	7380	335.13	287.96
TOTAL	**17620**	**800.00**	**446.67**
Content (-silence)			
Technical	4399	193.53	233.03
Tactical	2380	101.73	322.66
Other	10841	504.74	399.51
TOTAL	**17620**	**800.00**	**447.04**

5.4 Discussion

Approaches to coaching and the role played by how the coaches communicate and work with their participants has been the topic of many investigations (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Hall*et al.*, 2016). A less prescriptive approach, such as questioning and self-discovery, has been shown to impact learning positively (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Ford *et al.*, 2010) Furthermore, participants may suffer negative side effects regarding their learning should coaches deploy methods including instruction, due to their prescriptive nature (Williams & Hodges, 2004; Ford*et al*., 2010). Training form was noted as "less relevant" activities compared to playing form activities (Ford *et al.*, 2010).

When focusing on the present thesis, the intention was to build upon the observational research within elite environments (Partington & Cushion, 2015) in a grassroots context, through the digital recording of coaching practice. Through the analysis of said coaching practice led to the classifying of coaching practice into coaching practice behaviours (Morgan *et al.*, 2014). When giving consideration to the present study, the coaches utilised a higher number of behaviours relating to instructions (46%) compared to questioning (29%). As a prescriptive approach to coaching was dominant, findings suggest that grassroots soccer coaches are delivering practices that do not align with recommended practice activities (Ford *et al.*, 2010).

When considering the form of practice being delivered by the coaches within the present study, "playing form" has been outlined as a more relevant type of practice compared to

that of “training form” (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Furthermore, Lee and Simon (2009) highlight that such a method provides variable and random activities for participants. In combination with the provision of ‘higher contextual interference’, participants are led towards greater learning opportunities and long-term retention. Relating such research to the present study, on average the coaches spent a greater amount of time in playing form (41%) comparedto training form (35.2%) per training session. Therefore, the present study aligns with the claims made that coaches should spend a greater amount of time in the playing form zone thanthe training form zone. In addition, Hall *et al*., (2016) found that playing form was the most common practice activities in international women’s rugby with 58.5% of time spent in this category. These findings are currently the highest proportioned of playing form activities within the current coaching practice literature in the elite game. Similarly, the present study isthe largest proportion within the grassroots setting. Furthermore, the present study findings provide contrasting findings to that of a range of researchers (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Deakin & Cobley, 2003; Ford *et al.*, 2010), who note that participants spent time in non- relevant performance related activities. However, it should be acknowledged that the majorityof this playing form time consisted of small-sided games with little to no coaching interventions, no challenges or conditions placed on the participants.

When examining further coaching behaviours displayed by those who participated within the present study, praise (36.9%) was regularly used but when compared to an elite study in soccer this coaching behaviour was nowhere near as high (9.8%) (Cushion & Partington, 2013). Praise has been highlighted as a trait associated with a positive learning environment and was also ranked highly by those operating within a Netball setting (Navin, &Vinson, 2020). Furthermore, when comparing the different environments (Grassroots (G) and Elite(E)), additional coaching behaviours differed such as scold (G = 1.7% and E= 2.1%) and punishment (G = 1.2% and E = 0.1%).

When drawing attention back to comparisons within the present study, the findings show that coaches display positive behaviours more commonly than those of a negative nature (e.g. praise and scold). However, a further behaviour displayed is that of effort with coaches regularly using “hustle” to stimulate their participants (29.5%). Research has highlighted the importance of training sessions replicating the challenges and conditions faced by participants within a competitive, game environment (Light, 2013). This is down to the tactical transfer, the decision making required along with the mirrored challenges for participants as individuals andas a team (Hall, *et al*., 2016). When considering the research surrounding non-elite groups, findings

show that those in elite soccer teams participated within a greater number of activitiesin playing form than at a grassroots level (Ford *et al*., 2010).

The role of training has been advocated as being key in the preparation of participants for competitive match environments (Light, 2013; Harvey & Jarrett, 2014). However, throughout the coaches' training sessions, although playing form was evident, minimal challenge was provided by the coaches' and their role in this setting (the setting of game-based practices) should be clarified. Although setting up small-sided games, further emphasis needsto be placed on creating conditions which will maximise the challenge presented to the participants (Aguiar, *et al*., 2012). Coaching interventions relevant to the theme or topic of the session must be presented to the participants whether as ateam, small group or as an individual. Furthermore, the additional variables that should be frequently changed are the team sizes, the pitch size, the topic being worked on and, as aforementioned, the interventions made by the coach (Aguiar *et al*., 2012). It should also be noted that the coaches' spent a large portion of the playing form element of the session focusingon shouting instructions at the participants. However, these [instructions] were focused on the laws of the game and the effort being exerted by the participants. This is in place of technical or tactical suggestions which may provide greater value to the participants; certainly, at the ageand developmental stage they are currently located (Miller, *et al*., 2011).

When considering the role of grassroots coaching, a focus on introducing participants to the basic skills of the game along with the techniques and basic understandings may lead to an explanation of why playing form and training form activity levels differ across contexts (age groups, competitive level, etc) (Trudel & Gilbert, 2013). However, context should not necessarily mean a justification for the differencing of coaching practice (Hall *et al*., 2016), with coaches, no matter the level, constantly examining whether there is an alignment betweenthe practice being delivered and the effective coaching practice as outlined within literature (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Côté, *et al*., 2007).; including enjoyment, performance and learning (Light, 2013).

Although the coaches within the present study had a large proportion of their training sessions in the practice form, researchers (Gabbett, Jenkins & Abernethy, 2009; Williams & Hodges, 2005) outlined that a short-term improvement may increase given the high number of opportunities to practice skill in a concentrated fashion. Nevertheless, as coaching practice isa complex and messy process, a number of variables must be prioritised to ensure productive results (Bowes & Jones, 2006), such as player development constrained against the parental

perceptions of winning.

As previously mentioned, questioning is one of the present studies most used coaching behaviours (29%). Research has acknowledged the role of questioning within sport coaching with studies noting that such a method can provide opportunities for enhanced self-awareness, discovery and problem solving (Chambers & Vickers, 2006). Furthermore, questioning provides greater opportunities for participants to take an active role in their own learning (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Questioning can be broken down into two approaches; 1) Convergent questions, which is when information has been presented to the participants, who then simply recalls what they have seen or heard before, whereas a 2) Divergent questions require the participants to actively take part critically whether that is overcoming a problem orsituation to provide an answer (Partington & Cushions, 2013; Pearson & Webb, 2006). Furthermore, the role of coaches is to facilitate learning through the detailed design and implementation of the learning environment (Hall *et al*., 2016). This is then further complemented by the use of effective questioning and interactions of the participants (Light &Evans, 2010).

As a cohort, the coaches regularly utilised questions to gauge feedback, however when examined further, the types of questions used by the coaches were convergent (83%) comparedto divergent (17%). Findings suggest that the coaches in the present study style of questioningwas fairly limited, with simple 'yes' or 'no' answers rather than complex and challenging scenarios to unlock information being presented to the participants. In a similar study, Partington and Cushion (2013), discovered similar findings with elite coaches coaching within a soccer environment with coaches focusing on convergent (5.3% per session) instead of divergent (2.5%).

Given the combination of coaching behaviours displayed by the participants within the present study there would be logic behind the blended use of both playing and training form. To expand, given the numerous responsibilities held by grassroots coaches in terms of introducing new participants to a sport including basic techniques, laws of the game, basic tactics amongst others, an inclusive and varied coaching approach may be beneficial. Although at a different level, Hall and colleague's (2016) make a similar point. However, instead of preparing new participants to take part in a new sport, they instead were examining elite international participants preparing for international competition. Rather than deciding if and when one type of practice activity should be utilised compared to another, instead gaining a detailed understanding of how such practices can improve and positively challenge the participants, individually and as a whole, along with the relevance of each element of the practice

may provide a deeper understanding of coaching (Hall *et al*., 2016). Highlighting the need for critical reflection (Jones & Wallace, 2005).

When giving thought to the implications of the present study, coaches should look to maximise appropriate playing form activities within their sessions, with the utilisation of appropriate challenges, conditions and sizes (e.g. 2v2, 3v3 etc), as has been recommended in previous works (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Furthermore, for coaches to be able to effectively plan, deliver, coach and develop themselves, the role of reflection should take a greater part of their daily activities. Such tools, it could be argued, would lead to theenhancement of knowledge, their understanding of said knowledge in a practical environment and finally the role such knowledge plays in the context they are coaching in (Gilbert & Trudel,2001; Knowles *et al*., 2005).

It should be acknowledged, that although the data collected was substantial and the data analysis thorough, there are still limitations present with the study. Firstly, the data collected did not span a full soccer season and therefore a recommendation would be for this work to be continued in a more longitudinal fashion (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Ford *et al*., 2010). The methodology utilised, systematic observations, does also have limitations such as the majorityof the literature has examined coaches within the context of the training environment rather than in a match scenario (Smith & Cushion, 2006). Furthermore, it is challenging for researchers to draw comparisons due to effectiveness not being tied to the frequency of certainbehaviours, even among specific sports or domains (Abraham & Collins, 1998).

5.5. Summary

The aim of this study was to investigate the coaching behaviours of grassroots English soccer coaches who coached within the English FA's Foundation Phase (5-12 years), Specifically, theobjective was to gain unprecedented insights into a field not yet fully explored; that of grassroots coaches' behaviours. This study set out to explore how coaches delivered coaching sessions, that is, the coaching behaviours they utilised to develop young soccer participants. Eight coaches were observed, and data was collected through filmed systematic observations.

The data was analysed through the Coach Analysis and Intervention System (CAIS) to assess what the coaches did practically within their sessions. Results indicated that the coaches reliedon instructional behaviour. There was minimal evidence of coaches developing the soccer participants into decision makers nor for the facilitation of creativity, suggesting a lack of cohesions between the findings and recommended practice (Ford *et al.,* 2010). Findings also

suggest that coach education and grassroots soccer would benefit from greater input from coach educators when developing interventions to support the improvement and alignment of coaching behaviours within grassroots soccer.

5.6 Conclusion

The present study looked to investigate the coaching behaviours of foundation phase grassroots soccer coaches that were evidenced within their coaching practice. Given the volumeof data collected, along with the number of participants the current study presents an image which displays elements of traditional coaching. This is through the constant use of coaching behaviours such as instruction and hustle, whilst also providing coaching practices such as the implementation of small-sided games along with coaching behaviours including questioning. It is only when delving deeper that the pendulum swings back to a more traditional style of coaching. For example, the limited interventions, challenges, constrictions and conditions placed on the group or individuals. Findings looked to outline core behaviours along with the regularity said behaviours were deployed. Results show that a prescriptive approach tocoaching is evident with the participants utilising methods such as instruction, hustle and direct management throughout their sessions. Furthermore, the coaching behaviours were not affected by the practice being delivered by the coaches and contradicts the "facilitator role" grassroots coaches are recommended to be. Furthermore, although questioning facilitates the acceleration of a participant's decision making and problem solving, given the high percentage of convergent questions compared to divergent, it would be acceptable to say that such benefitswould not be seen within the current participants being coached. Although playing form was the largest state participants utilised during their coaching sessions, questions are raised about the activities within these states. To further clarify, although utilising a playing form state, minimal coaching, individual or group challenges, game restrictions or conditions were placedon the participants. Due to the nominal studies undertaken within a grassroots setting, the present study is one of the first to have examined such an area of importance, that is grassrootsfoundation phases soccer.

Further research in both similar and diverse contexts is required to begin to paint a fuller picture when considering grassroots sport. One of the core ambitions of the present study wasto gain further understanding when considering the ranges of behaviours and activities utilisedby coaches. Exploring the coaching behaviours which underpin said activities provide a useful insight into the elements of coaching that affect the development of a positive learning environment. Although examining coaches in their own environment, on the coal face, research should perhaps consider looking to combine the actions of grassroots coaches (what, how and

why they coach), with the thoughts of elite coach educators. There is still a clear knowledge gap in terms of what is recommended by research and what is delivered by practitioners and such a study may lead to the decrease of this gap.

CHAPTER SIX

A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values, beliefs, and practices from the viewpoint of coach educators

6.1 Introduction

The educational development of sport coaches has been described as a complex process (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Coaches require a combination of bespoke, personal and impromptu approaches to learning (Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, & Nevill, 2001). One of the contributors to coaches educational journey is that of a National Governing Body of sport (NGB), through the role of formal education and certification. Additional interaction between coaches and NGB's is visible through further courses and continuous professional development activities. Knowles and colleagues (2001) described the process of coach education as generally consisting of short blocks of intense contact, combined with months or years of non-contact. A criticism of such methods is that they do not facilitate the effective integration of new knowledge gained, nor is such knowledge transferred successfully into coaching practice (Knowles *et al*., 2001). Contrastingly, coaching knowledge and practice is regularly developed through informal and non-formal learning moments in the form of 'folk' pedagogies (Cushion, 2013), and personal interpretations of previous experiences (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Gilbert & Trudel 2001; Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990). Opportunities to develop provisions regarding coach education have been recommended through the focusing on how coaches develop their own learning (Knowles *et al*., 2005).

When giving thought to frameworks to enhance opportunities for individual coaches, reflective practice appears useful for coach education. Placing greater emphasis on the role reflective practice plays in coach development would link '…knowledge gained from professional experience, observations, coaching theory, and education' (Nelson & Cushion, 2006, p.175); whilst exposing coaches to experiential learning opportunities (e.g., Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983, 1987). Moreover, such frameworks would lead to deep deliberations in terms of the careful consideration and practical implementation of newly developed and critiqued knowledge within coaching practice (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). Indeed, reflection has been incorporated into the terminology of coach education, with regular references being made of the importance to contemplate previous activities (Cushion, 2016; Cushion, Griffiths, & Armour, 2018); along with being advocated as an essential learning tool for coaches (e.g. Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gallimore, Gilbert & Nater, 2014; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; 2006).

The coach educator should provide coaches with the tools and knowledge to influence practice-based development in their coaching practice (Cushion, Griffiths & Armour, 2017). Given the influence coach educators have on grassroots coaches, the educators remain largely absent (Cushion *et al*., 2018). Coach education has focussed on reflection (e.g. Cassidy, Potrac & McKenzie, 2006; Knowles, Borrie & Telfer, 2005; Nelson & Cushion, 2006), yet how these practices feature from the perspectives of a coach educator within grassroots soccer is yet to be fully studied. Given that the development of coaching knowledge is contributed more through informal learning experiences compared to more formal education (e.g. Mallet *et al*., 2009; Stoszkowski & Collins 2016), the coach educator role has been represented as against a learning culture (Abraham, Muir & Morgan, 2010). A core challenge with coach education is the ascribed high level of value placed upon educators by the coach-learners, leading to prescriptive coach education rather than transformational (Cushion, *et al*., 2017; Piggot, 2012; Blackett, *et al*., 2015). Coaches accept information with little criticality, or they ignore advice and continue with habituated practice leading to minimal developments in their coaching (Dewey, 1933; Cushion *et al*., 2017). Nevertheless, the role of coach educator continues to be of importance to develop coaches, facilitate positive experiences of learning, and transfer information (Nelson *et al*., 2012; Reid & Harvey, 2014). The aim of coach education in a grassroots setting is to facilitate positive youth development outcomes (Newman, Ortega, Lower, & Paluta, 2016; Vella, Crowe, & Oades, 2013); alongside the development of reflective practice and the eventual advancement of positive youth participants (Santos, Gould, & Strachan, 2019). Additionally, a thorough coach education programme has been claimed to enable graduate coaches to soundly deliver appropriate coaching to their participants. Whilst additionally gaining an understanding the role and practical methods of reflection.

To enable the effective development of learning, reflection has been summarised as the combination of knowledge and experience (Dewey, 1938/6). Initially, two core opportunities for reflection were outlined by Schön's (1983) interpretation of Dewey's work. These included reflecting-in-action, reflecting whilst performing an action, and reflecting-on-action perspective, reflection completed immediately after the conclusion of an action. (Schön, 1983). Furthermore, a third element of reflection was developed by Gilbert and Trudel (2001, 2004), outlined as retrospective reflection-on-action. This can be brought to life through the example of a coach considering their practices at home after their activity concluded. Coakley (2016) notes that coach educators face a backlash from coaches as certain stakeholders (e.g. parents) may not appreciate the positive youth development strategies being taught. Further challenges circulate around the focus on technical and tactical strategies required to complete a course, compared to

philosophical and contextual aspects of coaching (Holt, 2016). Cushion *et al.,* (2017) noted that coach educators have journeyed through the educational system in a similar fashion to the coaches they work with. Such involvements may have influenced coach educators' in both positive and negative ways, leading to the flourishing of certain values and beliefs (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008). Similarly, as practice is always linked with prior practice (Coburn & Stein, 2006), an educator's experiences could have been shaped in contexts leading to ingrained knowledge, beliefs and assumptions regarding 'who they are' as a coach and 'what needs to be done' (Cushion *et al*., 2017). With this mind, it can be agreed that a coach educator's own coach learning journey and practice has been informed by the trajectory of their career and experiences (Cushion *et al*., 2017); an area of study that still requires exploration. Such as elite youth (Strachan, Côté, & Deakin, 2011) and high school sport (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007) have been extensively studied. Therefore, this chapter intends to contribute to the grassroots context of coaching to facilitate a more holistic understanding of sport coaching and coach education.

The role of reflection has been highlighted as key to professional development (e.g. Culver & Trudel, 2006), and to facilitate the undertaking of criticality (e.g. Knowles, *et al*., 2001; Knowles *et al*., 2006; Taylor, Werthner, Culver & Callary, 2015). Additionally, reflection develops greater self-awareness (e.g. Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013), creates synergies between practice and theory (e.g. Douglas & Carless, 2008; Irwin, Hanton & Kerwin, 2004), and overall, improve coaching practice (e.g. Cushion, Ford & Williams, 2012; Cropley, Miles & Peel, 2012; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Irwin *et al*., 2004). The values, beliefs and ideas of coaches should be questioned through autonomous thinking to aid the development of their knowledge and practice (Cushion 2016; Fendler, 2003); however reflective practice is often discussed uncritically and at a surface-level (Cushion, 2016; Downham & Cushion, 2020).

Most research is coach focused, with minimal scholarly activity focusing on the educator (Cushion *et al*., 2017). That being said, research that has focused on coach education has examined the recruitment process, training and support, skills and personal development, or recruitment of coach educators, respectively (e.g. Abraham, Morgan, North, Muir, Duffy, Allison, Cale, & Hodgson, 2013; Nash & Collins, 2006). Albeit these activities have developed the field of coach education, they have done little to build on a lack of research examining the coach developer (Abraham *et al*., 2013). Indeed, Cushion *et al*., (2017) notes that given this void in the sport coaching literature, coach educators may as well be "…rendered invisible" (p. 4). Therefore, gaining an insight and understanding of coach educators provides an opportunity to

advance coach education, providing significant value to both the sport coaching literature and sport governing bodies.

The context of the present study is that of a coach educator working with grassroots soccer coaches. Therefore, some attention will focus on the national governing body of soccer, The English Football Association. Taking this approach provides an opportunity to develop cause and context with regards to the shaping of coach education courses. Additionally, the methods of delivery undertaken by coach educators, in terms of course support and during the 'in-situ' developmental phase may be advanced. Cultural expectations and norms, such as certain ideals, values, preferred approaches to learning and what is considered good coaching practice may be influenced by the institutions in charge (Hodkinson *et al*., 2008). Limitations of creativity, structure, and possibilities (for practice) for coaches may be affected by such norms (Cushion *et al*., 2017). Educators require the ability to both deliver education and support those in their charge, in a bespoke and tailored manner to the coach. As such, understanding how different people learn, alongside the settings and contexts in which learning takes place is vital. By acquiring an understanding of coach education alongside the educator's beliefs, values, practices and experiences, an insight into the tutor-learner relationship will be provided. Alongside the developing the structure of both formal coach education and in-situ coach development, such findings will facilitate the enhancement of support for soccer coaches within a grassroots setting.

This chapter, therefore, sought to engage with active coach educators to provide a reflective opportunity in terms of the coach education currently being delivered within the grassroots soccer coaching community. By examining the current status of coach education, along with insights from active educators, a unique opportunity to impact grassroots soccer coaching will be provided. This should happen through the development of further provision and support for grassroots soccer coaches. This study intends to answer the following research question:

RQ3: How do Coach Educator's perceive the role of coaching philosophy within grassroots soccer?

6.2 Method

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were used to gain an insight into the thoughts and opinions of coach educators. With the aim of developing new knowledge to improve practical action (Jones & Wallace, 2005), a pragmatic approach was taken with a thematic analysis completed of the transcribed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process aimed to produce a level of depth and richness that would provide the sport coaching literature with novel

insight,unseen previously in this area. With the purpose of exploring the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of coach educators, along with their perspectives on the development of grassroots soccer coaches within the foundation phase. The coach educators were employed in a full or part time capacity within The English Football Association (The FA). The FA consists of multiple departments, subsidiary organisations and a large full and part-time workforce that focusses on both the elite and grassroots of soccer.

Those included within this study were full-time Coach Educators or part-time AffiliateTutors within the English Football Association. The roles stated were introduced with the intention of providing supplementary coach education in a more relevant and specific context (Fenwick & Nerland, 2014), compared to the formal coaching courses which were considered de-contextualised (Cushion *et al*, 2017). The coach educators had the responsibility of combining coach education delivery in a formal course setting with other coaches, as well as providing in-situ support. The latter takes the form of observing and mentoring the coaches within the context of their grassroots club setting.

Participants

The participants who consented to be part of this study held the position of "FA Affiliate Tutor"and/or "FA Coach Developer/Educator" within the English Football Association. To ensure clarity throughout this chapter, both roles will bs discussed as 'Coach Educator' from this pointon. The coach educators held a minimum of a UEFA B Licence (n=3) or UEFA A Licence (n=5). In addition, all coach educators earned a minimum of an honour's degree in a relevant subject (sport coaching/ development/ science), awarded the "Developing the Developer" coach education certificate along with having a minimum of 10 years professional coaching experience. Three participants were female and five were male, aged between 35 and 57 years.Furthermore, the coach educators worked in a full-time position within The FA (n=4) or held an additional full-time coach education role that complemented their part-time role within TheFA (n=4). Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to enable a rich insight into their experiences and their approaches to coaching, whilst ensuring anonymity throughout (Webster& Mertova, 2007). Biographical information has been discussed regarding the included coach educators and provides a unique opportunity to gain insights into the daily lives of the coach educators. Furthermore, this gives an understanding of what the coach educators see as important and their interpterion of their past, present and future (Schubring, Mayer & Thiel, 2018), as can be seen in Table 6.1.

Roy has 14 years of professional coaching experience, is a (Level 3) UEFA B Licence coach,with his first experiences coming as a university graduate. He recollects his early coaching experiences: “I remember being chucked in at the deep end really. No one wanted to coach this junior team and I was asked to do it after doing some work experience with one of the coaches.” Roy’s first experiences clearly impacted on his thoughts of coach education: “I was unqualified and unsupported, and although I loved every second, I could of done with a bit more support from those around me and I think that is where my ambition to do exactly that for my cohort of coaches comes from”.

Ryan has 15 years of professional coaching experience and is a (Level 4) UEFA A Licence coach. Ryan has held numerous coach development roles, whilst spending the last 10 years ina full-time coach education position within The FA. He outlines his progression into the position of coach educator: “I worked at my local county council as a sport development officer, before moving into a new team developed by The FA called the FA Skills Programme.I’ve then continued my work at The FA in a dedicated coach education role at a regional level”.

Caroline has 19 years of coaching experience and is a (Level 4) UEFA A Licence coach. Caroline works professionally in the women’s game whilst also working part-time for The FA. Caroline’s coaching intentions were demonstrated clearly from the start, with key considerations focusing on those she is working with: “My aim is the help those I’m working with, participants or coaches, learn, develop and overall feel more comfortable, competent and confident.”

Adrian has 17 years of professional coaching experience and is a (Level 4) UEFA A Licencecoach. Adrian currently works in a full-time position within The FA focusing on coach education nationally. He previously occupied a similar role at a regional level. Adrian gave his thoughts on coaching: “It’s all about the participants for me…things have to be about the participants, and by that, I mean it’s not about me. I’ve got to give them the tools they need to express themselves and improve.”

Paul is a lead coach educator for the foundation phase age group (Under 5-12 years) and is a (Level 4) UEFA A Licence coach, with 27 years’ experience. Paul holds a full-time position within The FA and educates grassroots coaches nationally. Paul noted that he found the best learning takes place: “…in the messiest of environments and, as coach educators, we need to be comfortable away from structure and tidy organisation which is where I think the best learning takes place.”

Emma is a UEFA B Licence coach with 11 years of coaching and coach education experience.She is a part-time, regional educator and holds a full-time, professional coaching role in a Championship Academy. With respect to coach educators and wider aspects of coach development, Emma noted: “I think we play a key role in the initial learning of those we work with…erm…but a lot of the learning takes place back at their clubs so if that element could be developed further I think it would be a pretty rounded learning experience for the candidate.”

Julie is a UEFA A Licence Tutor and has 25 years of coaching experience, currently occupyinga fulltime position within the FA. She holds the UEFA A Licence qualification whilst also having professional soccer experience as both a player and a manager. Julie’s standpoint on coach education was that: ‘…our role is to prepare these novice coaches with the tools to start making an impact. I think if we do that, at least they have some idea of what good practice looks like. From my perspective, if they feel a bit more confident when they leave us then that’sa good start.”

Andy is currently an Academy Manager for a professional soccer club in the Premier League.He holds the UEFA A Licence and tutor’s the UEFA A Licence course, nationally on a part- time basis. Andy has 22 years of coaching experience across coach education, semi-professional, and professional soccer environments. He noted that he was actually quite late to coaching: “I actually had a whole career as a fireman before falling in love with coaching. I did the whole grassroots thing, did my badges and just climbed the ladder really. I like to thinkI can empathise with the challenges grassroots coaches face at these early stages.”

Table 6.1 Participant Information Overview.

Pseudonym	Age	Professional Experience	Typeof Role	Qualification Overview	Experience
Roy	36	14	Part Time	UEFA A Licence, BSc	UEFA B Licence Tutor Regional Coach Educator
Ryan	35	15	Full Time	UEFA B Licence BSc	UEFA B Licence Tutor Regional Coach Educator
Caroline	43	19	Part Time	UEFA A Licence PGCE BSc, MSc	UEFA B Licence Tutor Regional Coach Educator
Adrian	41	17	Full Time	UEFA A Licence BSc	UEFA A Licence Tutor National Coach Educator
Paul	57	27	Full Time	UEFA A Licence BSc, MA	UEFA A Licence Tutor National Coach Educator
Emma	36	11	Part Time	UEFA B Licence BSc	UEFA B Licence Tutor Regional Coach Educator
Julie	53	25	Full Time	UEFA A Licence BSc	UEFA A Licence Tutor National Coach Educator
Andy	46	22	Part Time	UEFA A Licence BSc	UEFA A Licence Tutor National Coach Educator

Design and Procedure

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Northumbria Ethics Committee. A sample of eight level soccer coach educators were invited to participate through a snowball sampling approach and were initially contacted via email correspondence (Appendix D1). This ensuredaccess to a network consisting of appropriate and knowledgeable participants (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Given the researcher's previously mentioned coaching background and qualifications, approaching 'gatekeepers' with whom he had professional relationships allowed access to appropriate participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Upon agreeing to partake in the study, a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix D2) was provided, with all coaches completing a Generic Informed Consent Form (Appendix D3) and a Video/Voice Recording

Informed Consent Form (Appendix D4). Once the study had ceased, participants were provided with a Participant De-Brief (Appendix D5), and their anonymity has been maintained through the incorporation of pseudonyms. One pilot study interview was completed to gain feedback about whether the interview schedule was comprehensible and appropriate, and that the questions were well defined, clearly understood and presented in a consistent manner (Hassan, Schattner & Mazza, 2006).

Participants met the following inclusion criteria:

> They held the minimum of a Level Three in Soccer Coaching qualification,
>
> They were active coach educators within grassroots soccer,
>
> They had a minimum of one-year (12 months) coach education experience in aprofessional role within The FA.

Once recruited, and informed consent had been gained, the coach educators were asked to supply three days and times to be interviewed. Due to the national location of the participants interviews were completed via telephone and recorded via a digital voice recorder (Sony ICD-BX140 Digital Voice Recorder) before being transcribed *verbatim*. The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes (per participant), with the first author applying a semi-structuredinterview technique to facilitate the development of a positive relationship and rapport. This approach provided the candidates with opportunities for discussion to gain a rich understandingof the responses of the participants, probes were used by the interviewer to gain greater depth and detail. For example, open-ended phrases such as “What else can you tell me about that?”,“How did you feel about that?” and “Why did that happen, do you think?”.

Member checks were undertaken to develop the validity of the responses. In addition, this process was completed with the view of enhancing the data collected, due to the subjectivity of the data collected (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Interviews consisted of three core sections. First, the interviews focussed on coach educators background, educational experience, playing and coaching history, and qualifications. Secondly, each interview examined their viewpoints in terms of the grassroots soccer coaches they work with. The finalelement of the interview focused on opportunities to enhance coach education development that may be available.

Data Analysis

There were six stages to the inductive analysis. Steps one and two involved thoroughly reading,note taking and examining all eight transcripts, prior to outlining identified the topic. In step three the categories were consolidated, fine-tuned and reduced in terms of relevance and

this resulted in candidate themes. The fourth step was the refinement of candidate themes with stepfive named and defined each theme. Stage six consisting of writing up this study; that is the weaving of analytical narrative to the existing sport coaching literature.

6.3 Results

The participants provided an in depth and thorough overview of the process of coach education as experienced by them. A total of 719 minutes of conversation was recorded, transcribed into 72,117 words prior to analysis. The completed interviews lasted an average of 89 minutes. Themes covered the Coach Educator journey, the role of the Coach Educator, the development of coaching knowledge, the challenges within coach education, post course coach development and opportunities to improve coach education. Throughout the interviews there seemed to be a genuine sense of empathy for the coaches (by the coach educators), along with an ambition to provide the best learning experiences possible for the coaches. Importantly, coaches were placed at the heart of the focus of each coach educator. See Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Second Order Categories and Final Themes

Second Order Category	Final Themes
The Coach Educator Journey	Theme One The Coach Educator
The Role of the Coach Educator	
Development of Coaching Knowledge	Theme Two Coach Development
Post Course Coach Development and Reflective Practice	
Informal Mentoring and Reflective Practice	
Challenges within Coach Education	Theme Three Coach Education Development
Opportunities to Improve Coach Education	

The Coach Educator

The first theme consisted of the Coach Educator. This was broken into two second order categories. These included the personal backstory of the coach educator (The Coach Educator Journey) and the actual role and responsibilities of the coach educator (The Role of the Coach Educator).

The Coach Educator Journey

All coaches in this study had achieved a university degree, whilst gaining additional and coaching specific qualifications. The majority of educators outlined their intention to pursue acareer within sport or coaching. A core aspect of many of the candidates was their desire to take up a professional coaching role from an early age with Roy stating his journey:

> So, my own personal coach education journey started when I was around 21. I was just coming to the end of my degree and wanted to set up my own coaching business. In all honesty, I was a challenging student as a child. But anyway, I did my level 1 and 2 relatively quickly and then my level 3 (UEFA B Licence) around 2 years later….erm…I coached at a lot of different levels like at The FA full-time, then university and college before getting a role as a tutor and here I am. I would like to do my UEFA A Licence (Level 4), because then I can start tutoring on more courses for The FA. (Roy)

Ryan added his journey was aligned to sport from being a school pupil:

> I was only ever good at sport…erm…and I loved football so after school I went I thought I could work in sport so I went to uni(versity) and did a sport degree and got my badges (Level 1 and 2) while I did the course, which was good. I then worked in the sport department at a council near mine and to be honest was quite happy…erm...but then a few years later The FA advertised for a role and I've been here since, so around 13 years. I've not tutored all that time, but I have worked through my UEFA B and A licence (Level 3 and 4) and tutor all the way from UEFA B courses to Level 1 and 2. (Ryan)

Holding a width of experiences, Paul discussed that his coach education work was all hehad ever wanted to do and that it was not only confined to the mainland of England, withthe indication of off-shore travel:

> Well I've been in this job for about 15 years now, ha-ha, C****t when did I get so old…erm… so my current title is National Coach Developer and I work with coaches in the foundation phase across the whole of the UK and we even fly out to the Isle of White and Man too… but I have been fortunate to manage England in tournaments and experience working with the youngsters so quite a few different experiences really…erm…in terms of qualifications I have achieved the UEFA A Licence award in both football and futsal and I have also

> recently got another degree, so a little late in the day with the master's degree but who says there are rules on learning! But yeah, football is all I've ever wanted to be a part of. (Paul)

However, this was not the case for all candidates with Caroline outlining that her ambitionto become a professional footballer was her main focus, before she made the decision tocoach later in her career:

> My own journey actually had no real intention of being a coach, I wanted to be a footballer. I played up all the age groups, I played with the boys and I played for my local centre of excellence…erm… but once it looked like that route wasn't an option for me anymore, and to be honest the pay wasn't great and it wasn't full-time yet so probably a good decision really. I started to spend a lot of time shadowing the coaches I had been coached by. Mostly UEFA A Licence coaches, and I literally followed them around anywhere they would go. I worked through my badges up to UEFA A Licence and now have a high-level job as a technical director at professional women's football club. (Caroline)

Andy also had no intentions of a career in coaching, noting that "I was enjoying workingin the fire department, coached my son's team as a volunteer and sort of got hooked". Adrian was one of the only participants to highlight their own passion for coaching as themain driver for his coaching intentions:

> So just like most of my colleagues I am degree qualified and then added my badges on top of that…erm…so I am a UEFA A Licence qualified coach and I tutor up to UEFA B Licence courses, so that is level 1, 2 and 3 courses and I have done so for about four years now…erm…I spent a lot of time in a football development role, doing the odd bit of coach education but then The FA did a big revamp and some new full-time coach education roles came up and I was fortunate to get the nod. I just love it though, the chance to work with coaches and to, hopefully improve the chance of youngsters loving the game for life too. (Adrian)

In the case of Roy, Ryan and Paul the intention to coach professionally was developed atan early age, whereas with Caroline and Andy such thoughts were fostered later through varying circumstances.

Role of the Coach Educator

The second element of the theme focused on the role of the coach educator. The provision of support was emphasised by the coach educators, with a focus on providing holistic support forthe coaches. Roy outlined his passion for those he works with as he made this point when saying:

> I see my role as helping community coaches become better, more rounded individuals so when they go back into their club environments… erm… they have the ability to coach the participants in a way that is unified with other qualified coaches, kind of an FA way, or simply put… erm… where the participants get lots of touches of the ball and doesn't stand still too long. (Roy)

Furthermore, Julie outlined that her own coaching journey had been "challenging" so shefelt that being a "safety net" for coaches, providing help and support to facilitate the coaches' development was key:

> It's (the role of the coach educator) definitely being the safety net for the coach. I remember being really stressed and anxious during my own coaching badges and I think having that supportive figure is something that the candidates need. Just to know its ok to find their coaching journey challenging. (Julie)

Paul noted a similar feeling, although made no specification in terms of whether these comments were focused on technical or more holistic support:

> Oh, our role is definitely for the coaches. I think the majority of the workforce simply want to help those on the courses…erm… and by doing so, you see them progress and carry on their coaching journey; that's where the satisfaction and motivation for the job comes.

When probed with the question, "Where do you see coaches needed the most help?", Pauloutlined his comments related to the technical aspects of coaching rather than developingthe person:

> Oh…definitely technical. I think our main role is to support them with the coaching principles, the technical detail, and then if they need further support down the road, we can focus on that, as and when [it comes]. (Paul)

Paul's comments do not align with those of his colleagues who noted that providing support rated higher on their schedule. Such varying comparisons suggest that coach educators may hold different agendas within grassroots soccer coach education.

Coach Development

In order to focus on the grassroots coaches learning journey, the second phase of the interview discussed how coaching knowledge was developed (Development of Coaching Knowledge) and how this knowledge was continued once the course had reached completion (Post CourseCoach Development) and finally the role of Informal Mentoring and Reflective Practice).

Development of Coaching Knowledge

One of the main objectives of the coach educators was the development of coaching knowledgeamong grassroots coaches. However, the context in which learning takes place was not as synchronised with Adrian noting that he felt a large portion of learning took place within the classroom setting:

> In our courses we do a range of things to help along the learning process. We spend a bit of time in the classroom but very little is coach-led these days… erm… it's certainly not death by PowerPoint anymore ha-ha. Instead we, you know, have tasks in groups and pairs and just generally have discussions about the topics being covered. Then comes the practical's out on the grass. In all honesty the depth of discussions and quality of conversations…erm…may even be more valuable than the stuff we do outside. (Adrian)

Not all coach educators were in agreement; with Ryan noting that he felt the greatest value forthe candidates was in the form of practical activities and demonstrations as this provides the coaches with opportunities to see best practice:

> For me, the learning happens out on the pitch. I think there is value in the classroom stuff but when you get into the nitty-gritty on the grass…erm… I think it really brings the game to life. I think when we model sessions and coaches can observe us and take a bit (of information) from what we are delivering…that is when a big chunk of learning happens. And then, they get to have a go and put that learning into practice. (Ryan)

A third, differing view was indicated by Paul, who gave the opinion that the most beneficial element of the course was not the classroom delivery or the practical coaching,but in the informal elements of the course:

> We try to get the information across to the coaches in a lot of ways like questioning, group discussions… erm… obviously there is the practical's, the demos. But a lot of learning takes place with the smaller one on one conversations or… erm… perhaps a story from your background that the coaches can relate too. Sometimes the less formal the better in all honesty. (Paul)

Throughout the interview process, the in-situ element of the coach education process wasnot highlighted as beneficial from the perspectives of the coach educators in terms of initial knowledge development. 'Folk' pedagogies have been described as a main contributor to initial knowledge development, which could be why the insitu element wasnot highlighted within this part of the interview.

Post Course Coach Development

When considering the on-going development of grassroots coaches, the coach educators outlined the importance of what they do next. This refers to both a mid-block (course) break, or, upon completion of the course. Ryan uses a metaphor of a student-driver passing their driving test to highlight the importance of a coach delivering upon the returning to their own environment (upon leaving the course):

> Yeah, the course only does so much. What happens after the course is where the actual learning takes place and putting that learning into action happens. I have heard it compared to driving a car, in that, you might do your lessons and take your test but you really learn to drive once you pass… erm… and I think that's the case in coach learning. Making those mistakes back in their club and coming up with solutions on a cold, windy night in C*********n is where those key messages we have discussed will sink in and make sense. (Ryan)

Paul builds on the previous point and highlights that due to the "fake" element of the coaching course, coaching regularly back in the grassroots environment will enable the coach to develop further:

> When the learning after the course completes, or I suppose not completes, but the face-to-face part comes to an end, it's really huge cause they are, sort of, out on their own then. When we coach within the course obviously it is a little fake because of the learning and education environment, for example, we are coaching adults on a course, compared to the coaches who will be working with children in a more comfortable environment because it's their own club. (Paul)

Not only does Emma further outline the importance of club coaching, but she also highlights how she may have felt more comfortable if this had been an element of the course when she was a candidate:

> A lot of development actually takes place back at the candidate's club. We do something called "in-situ visits", which is where the coach is supported back in their own club. The coach gets two visits and then they can pay for extra support should they be deemed "not yet competent". Normally by this point, if the coach has actively engaged in the process, they are deemed competent. In-situ visits…erm…were never part of the course back when I was a candidate and I think I would have really appreciated the chance to be more relaxed working with my own participants. (Emma)

From the interviews, the emphasis and importance of what the coach does upon leaving the confines of the educational course is regarded as more important than the actual course.

Informal Mentoring and Reflective Practice

Paul highlighted that when the coaches return to their clubs they should shadow or workwith one of their club's more senior coaches as part of their post course development. Informal mentoring may be able to support the coaches by outlining what went well or possible areas to improve to aid the coaches' development:

> Something that myself and a few of my colleagues try to emphasise is the life after the course. You know, we can't be there all the time, especially when they are back at their clubs but something the candidates can do is think, and I mean really think, about their coaching, you know, how it went, what went well, what went not so well. Maybe ask one of the older coaches to watch them and give feedback… really take the time to improve and try different things. We all spend a lot of time looking forward but sometimes a lot of learning can take place by looking back at how our previous experiences went. (Paul)

In contrast, Roy noted that although there were positive outcomes associated with observing more experienced coaches, negatives could also occur. Roy discussed that thenewly qualified coach may be shown methods that would contradict the practices taughton the coaching course, leading to the delivery of inappropriate coaching:

> So our role is fairly prominent during the course but when the course concludes and the candidates graduate out of the course and are certified as Level 1 or 2 coaches, then it's kind of a different ball game for them…erm…I guess, they kind of look towards the groups of more senior coaches back at their clubs who have maybe got their level 1 or 2 already. So, a bit of mentoring will happen that way...erm…but this could be things against what we have taught on the course, like the coach asking questions rather than being commanding or asking participants to play in directional games compared to line drills. But we are constrained at this point because the workforce just can't provide the support needed. But in fairness, I guess that by that point in their learning journey the coaches should be able to look back on the course and their experiences and the information they are getting from their informal mentors. It is all part of coaching. (Roy)

The role of reflection was highlighted as a key component of coach development as notedby Emma: "I just remember when I first started, I would literally pick my sessions apart.It would be more about the technical side of the game, but I'd try to sort of think about what I was doing and why I was doing it." Elements of reflection were also discussed with the view that, if done successfully, coaches can guide their own development. Paul emphasised that although such principles lack the focus they require within the formal course, the techniques provide opportunities to improve:

> We don't spend a great deal of time on reflection formally, but I always try to get the message across that coaches can think about the things that went well and the things that could have been better and try to work on them. (Paul)

Julie outlined that she would "…take some of my candidates through good times to reflect, like [such as] on the drive home after a session or the next morning with a cuppa."When asked about the role of reflection within their own practice as educators, Ryan indicated that his practice falls within the retrospective reflection-on-action:

> When I actually reflect on my own course delivery, I constantly want to improve. I constantly want to feel like I deliver a real service for the candidates and they feel like they can ask me and challenge me whenever they want too. I think when I reflect on coach education as a whole, alongside my own delivery, we can get bogged down with things like how the little challenges went or even did every coaching point I was…erm…trying to get out come out the way I wanted it too, when really the real reflection should be on the candidates learning and if they were armed with the skills and tool ready to go out into the coaching world ready to become excellent and competent coaches. Leaving them with not only the ability to coach but the ability to think back and act on their own delivery is crucial for that coach who is participant orientated. (Ryan)

When asked what his reflective practice looked like, Andy was the only coach to describeundertaking reflection-in-action, albeit passively. This is noted in the second half of the below paragraph:

> To be honest I'm not a very formal person with my reflection. I never write anything down, it's more of a gut feeling. Normally I have a chat with my colleague's after some delivery and try to get some feedback. To be honest, a lot of the time I'm delivering and either see or feel something isn't quite clicking so I make a quick change to try and improve it. (Andy)

The role of reflection was discussed by numerous candidates, however, given the importance of the outlining of technical knowledge, limited time was spent on the mechanics of reflection. When asked about the reflective element, in terms of content, delivered within courses, Emma noted that it was "…maybe a slide where we have a chatabout things to consider when they are reflecting. Maybe an hour of an afternoon classroom session*"* with Adrian adding that "…the focus is quite short-sighted really. I mean, erm… we kind of ask them to reflect on their sessions but we don't challenge themtoo much in terms of reflecting on the challenges they faced or maybe how their philosophy looks on the pitch."

Given the varying insights provided by the coach educators, the presence of reflection is evidenced by the coach educators. However, the role in developing coaching

could be highlighted in a more comprehensive way by those in charge of course development. Similarly, the varying elements of reflection, the different elements to consider while a coach reflects, and the differing times reflection can commence could be advanced further to develop coach education.

Coach Education Development

The third theme looked at Coach Education as a whole. Elements that were discussed and examined included the daily struggles and challenges coach educators are faced with within the coach education landscape (Challenges within Coach Education) alongside the provision of developmental recommendations from the group of coach educators with regards to improving the provision offered to grassroots coaches (Opportunities to Improve Coach Education).

Challenges within Coach Education

Within the transcribed interviews, the coach educators highlighted numerous challenges faceddaily when delivering coach education. The coach educators noted that time was the biggest challenge. They outlined that time within the course setting, in terms of the length of the courseand the content they hoped to get through each day, was challenging to ensure enough information was provided to the course attendees. Ryan discusses the time they can spend to support each candidate, individually:

> Ha-ha challenges are always an interesting one! In all honesty, these days the challenges we face are more around the time we can dedicate to each candidate and things like that! (Ryan)

Caroline agreed, whilst also discussing that priority is given to those beginning their coaching journey, rather than those with experience:

> I think for me, one of the biggest challenges faced is simply my time", adding, If you think about the amount of courses there are a year, maybe three, with 24 brand new coaches on each, so roughly 80-150 new qualified coaches per year, plus the existing base of qualified grassroots coaches…erm…trying to satisfy all of them with individual, personal support is just impossible. I love working with people and individuals, but this isn't my full-time job and our priority is helping the brand-new coaches get through their qualifications and take their first steps in coaching. (Caroline)

Similarly, Adrian also outlined the volume of grassroots coaches working through coursesand requiring support was difficult to manage:

> The main thing that challenges me and the other tutors is that we are constantly on the lookout for the opportunity to support each individual as much as we can and… erm… there's a lot of coaches in the area and we only have so many hours in the week to get out on the grass and support. Even just calling some of the coaches I work with is incredibly time consuming… erm… I've thought about doing some online stuff, like workshops or Q + A (question and answer) sessions where we could get hundreds of grassroots coaches to log on and watch or get involved with discussions. (Adrian)

Additional challenges were drawn upon by the interviewees. These included the philosophy of grassroots coaches:

> We have a few challenges to overcome like the amount of content we can get through, combined with giving the students enough time to have a go and reflect… erm… but there are a few we have to confront fairly head on, such as like if a coach wants to focus on a certain thing like winning or a formation or playing style. (Roy)

Paul outlined very similar thoughts with regards to the focus of the coaches at the grassroots, foundation phase level:

> Basically, as a rule, we wouldn't put winning too high on the priorities, whereas some coaches do. Trying to acknowledge their point of view and gradually help them understand why development is a more suitable aim at the grassroots ages we are talking about (5-12 years)… that's certainly a challenge. (Paul)

Coincidentally, elements of the three varying opportunities for coaches to undertake reflection(reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action and retrospective reflection-on-action) were discussed passively by all the coach educators. When delivering demonstrations Ryan outlines the role of reflection-in-action plays in his coach education delivery:

> It's funny but when I am delivering a technical aspects of the course, say defendingas a back 3, in the past I have coached an element of the drill and not been completelyhappy with it, so I get the candidates to replay the incident so I can demonstrate moreaccurately. I think for me; the candidates deserve as much detail as possible and its my responsibility to suck it up if I have missed something and do it again. They arepaying for a service, really. (Ryan)

Reflection-in-action was also discussed by Paul who outlined he felt self-conscious deliveringin a classroom rather than out on the pitch:

> To be honest, if it's on the pitch I'm fine, but I tend to be very aware of what I am saying in the classroom. I remember once saying something about what a coaching philosophy involved, and I could tell no one had a clue what I meant ha-ha. So, I must of re-phrased it about three times to make sure I was being

clear. (Paul)

The Coach Educator's also outlined that reflections take place immediately after completing elements of their delivery:

> You know, sometimes when we are having a bad day, and I mean things like candidates having the hump cause they're out in the rain or maybe they have receivedfeedback they didn't like, it just kills me. I'm not emotional but I just think back to how I handled the situation and pull it apart. (Caroline)

Roy openly discusses that although reflection plays a part in his development, he spends the most time retrospectively reflecting-on-action:

> Yeah… I think my main reflective time is in bed to be honest. It's certainly not by choice! I kind of get into the mindset that I have done my best and my best is prettygood so as soon as my delivery, in the classroom or out on the pitch is finished, thenI start to focus on what's next. But later on, in bed it's different. I mean I just lie there, head spinning, dissecting my sessions and practices. It is useful though because the next day I'm raring to go, ready to improve. (Roy)

Adrian also considered how retrospectively reflecting-on-action played a part in their coaching development, outlining that:

> I think on the drive to the course is when I think a bit more deeply. Maybe it's because I am about to perform in a sense. But yeah, I normally have like a half an hour drive and I think about the different bits of the previous day and then I alwaysset out to have an even better day'. Similarly, Julie noted that 'When I arrive for whatever day we are on, let's say day 3, I normally have a quiet 10-15 minutes whereI review yesterday, not in great depth, but enough to know what went well and whatI would change and improve. (Adrian)

Opportunities to Improve Coach Education

The next element of the Coach Education Development theme which emerged from the transcribed interviews was the potential for improving current coach education provided by theFA. Some of the initial responses concentrated on the opportunities that grassroots coaches had to coach individually within the course setting. There was some consensus that a potential development of the course should bring greater opportunities to deliver independently of others, and for coaches to receive higher quality and bespoke feedback, with Ryan noting:

> I think if I was to improve coach education, I would say that giving the candidates more opportunities to coach and to get feedback would be helpful. On the courses they do get chances to coach but this is normally in groups of three or four and I think if this could be individual it would be so much more beneficial… erm… just to prepare them for when they are back at their clubs, it can be very daunting. (Ryan)

Adrian furthered this view of individualised candidate learning, and outlined possible formats:

> For me coaching and coach development is all about trying something, seeing if it works and then starting again. So what I mean by that… erm... and to answer your question, if I was to change what we do, and again, I think we do things pretty well at The FA, but it would probably be to give the candidates more opportunities to coach, to make mistakes, to learn, to reflect and to overall become better coaches whilst we have some time with them. That initial coaching contact and feedback is so important. So yes, if I was to tweak one thing it would be to give the candidates more time on the coaching pitch as individuals so they can get more tailored feedback. I actually think it would be quite easy to do, just perhaps some quicker tasks indoors, although they are very important… erm… and maybe splitting the groups up a bit. So instead of working with 20 participants as a group of three or four, instead you could be an individual and coach a group of 8-10. (Adrian)

In addition to the provision of more opportunities for coaches to coach and receive feedback, Andy suggested that this study had positively influenced his own thinking in terms of developing coach education:

> You know what? All this chat about reflection and its role in coaching and all I can think about is that we probably don't spend as much time as we could working through how to reflect with the coaches. So, I'll hang my hat on that, if we could do one thing to improve what we do it would be to give a more detailed overview of it (reflection). Because then, the coaches might be able to work through some stuff back at their clubs with a bit more self-awareness. (Andy)

Roy described the two aforementioned points as a combined 'toolkit'. He noted that ratherthan increasing opportunities to coach, the provision of greater support for planning and reflection may support the coaches more thoroughly in an in-situ setting:

> Oh, right, well if I was to develop or change coach education there is one or two things I would do… right off the bat I would either swap out or add an extra visit in with the candidates but instead of this just being practically based, I would work through some deep, meaningful reflection with them.. or at least ask them to show me how they reflect. It is such a big thing for us coach educators to provide the coaches with their own, kind of, toolkit, for them to use on the pitch, but then equally important is the things we do before and after a session…erm…like planning the coaching points, interventions and practice designs before the session…erm…and what we do after the session like what went well and what could have gone better. (Roy)

The final suggestion, in terms of developing coach education, was provided by Adrian who outlined his positive experiences as part of a community of practice and could see the benefits of including something similar with future coach education courses:

> To be honest, I think what we do is actually very good. We have a great group of staff pulling in the same direction, but I get what you're saying and it's always good to try and improve… erm… I tell you what we did once when I was on a course, I think it was my B Licence… erm… I lived near about three other coaches on the course and we used to meet up, put sessions on for each other and give feedback. Maybe something like that for the more local guys (coaches)? So, they could still be learning, reflecting on their own practice, challenging each other then maybe one of the mentors or Affiliate tutors (Coach Educators) could work with that group once a month or something. Maybe between the different blocks to keep some continuity. (Adrian)

6.4 Discussion

This study examined current coach education provisions for grassroots soccer coaches, from the perspectives of active coach educators currently employed by The English Football Association. A core element of coach education is the delivery of provision for grassroots soccer coaches to develop their coaching delivery and support for the participants with whom they coach (Cushion *et al*., 2017). The exploratory nature of this study was undertaken through in- depth interviews, with the intention of stimulating reflective discussions to inform future coacheducation practices and research, within a grassroots soccer setting.

Throughout the study, challenges, constraints, variables, and considerations were described. They illustrated the complexity of coach education and development (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Indeed, such a holistic and challenging learning environment should not be viewed as breakthrough within the sport coaching community. However, an empirical examination of what active coach educators depicts as good coach education, challenges within coach education and opportunities to develop coach education does provide a unique contribution to the coach education literature. Literature has described coach education as requiring a personally tailored approach to candidate learning (Knowles *et al*., 2001). However, our coach educators noted that the content of courses provided by The FA generally did not leave much room for interpretation or bespoke development. Similarly, this study found conflicting viewpoints of the process of coach education. Previous work noted that due to the short, intense blocks of courses minimal new knowledge could be integrated into practice successfully (Knowles *et al*., 2001). Nevertheless, one core focus of the coach educators was that of technical and tactical coaching knowledge, compared to scholarly-noted practices such as reflection

(Knowles *et al*., 2001), suggesting that there is a gap between the standpoint of academia and that of practitioners.

The aim of the study was to retrospectively examine coach education through the perspectives of coach educators. The focus was on the role of reflection in coach education and coaching given the experience-based learning nature of the framework (e.g., Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983, 1987). Literature has advocated the undertaking of reflection within coaching practice due to the opportunity to intertwine theory, education, experience and observations (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). When discussing such practices with the coach educators, there was a disparity between the acknowledged importance of reflection and the time spent in a formal learning environment. During formal courses candidates highlighted that they did not meticulously teach reflective skills with the grassroots soccer coaches. This suggests that reflection is given minimal consideration by grassroots soccer coaches who graduate from coach education courses. This is due to their lack of understanding with regards to critically considering knowledge they are taught and how this can be transferred into their ownpractice (Buysse *et al*., 2003). The educators advocated that their role as coach developers wasfocused around the grassroots candidates, mirroring the findings of previous works (Newman *et al*., 2016; Vella *et al*., 2013). However, additional factors highlighted by previous coach education literature (Santos *et al*., 2019) which include the development of reflective practice was not considered as a core role by the educators.

When considering reflection, due to the combining of knowledge and experience (Dewey, 1938/63; Schön, 1983), the framework plays a key role in learning. Multiple opportunities exist to reflect, including reflecting-in-action (reflecting whilst performing an action). Additionally, reflecting-on-action perspective (reflection completed immediately after the conclusion of an action) (Schön, 1983/1987) and retrospective reflection-on-action (reflection which occurs outside of the action-present) (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). As noted, the coach educators discussed the value of reflection in a positive light, however the offering in terms of coach education was significantly lacking, as discussed by the educators.

When breaking down the various formats of reflection, the most discussed was that of reflection-on-action, or learning through experience (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Such discussions were focused around both the grassroots coaches' experiences of reflection on the course, along with the coach educators' experiences of reflection. Grassroots course candidates were asked to undertake reflection at various points throughout the programme of learning.

Such practices were commonly completed upon the culmination of a task or practical delivery.That being said, benefits regarding the reflective process was highlighted (Cushion, 2016). Without developing an understanding of the additional opportunities reflection can take place,grassroots coaches are being limited in their understanding in terms of critically evaluating their knowledge and experiences; and the development of their practice (e.g. Knowles *et al*., 2001; Knowles *et al*., 2005; Taylor *et al*, 2015). When considering the practice of the coach educators', a core part of this role was reflecting. This was in the form of both individually andas a group, upon completion of the activity being delivered. Undertaking reflective practice atthis stage of the framework provides educator's with feedback and initial thoughts surroundingwhat went well and what could be developed further. Contrasting correlations are visible between the current provision within coach education and the reflective practices of the coacheducators, leading to similar deficiencies across both coaching and coach education practices within grassroots soccer.

The role of retrospective reflection-on-action currently plays within coach education, although not actively taught in terms of course content; limiting the opportunities for course candidates to effectively link theory to content effectively (e.g. Douglas & Carless, 2008; Irwin*et al*., 2004). This stage of reflection was discussed with the interviewee's, in terms of the grassroots soccer coaches learning and the learning of coach educators; which has been notedas professional development (e.g. Culver & Trudel, 2006). Regarding the processes of coach education, a regular evaluation of the previous day's course content is undertaken with the candidates. Though, as a practical activity such a process is not taught in any depth and is considered a brief review compared to a thorough reflective process. Considering how this form of reflection is visible through the actions of coach educator's, the interviewee's highlighted that their reflection was undertaken hours after the completion of the activity. Taking place on the journey home, this was often where the coach educator's reflection was completed, although others discussed this occurring in bed prior to sleep and the following morning. Furthermore, the coach educator's highlighted that such activities were completed both individually and as a coach educatory group. Such practices were done so informally, unlike planning and other elements of course delivery (e.g. practice design, participant feedback), which suggests a lack of importance in terms of the role of reflection. When completing retrospective reflection-on-action, both educators and coaches are provided an opportunity to undertake deep, rich and meaningful contemplations, along with considering information to develop which may not have been available at a prior stage of reflection (Gilbert

& Trudel, 2004). A more structured approach, in terms of taught candidate content, may provide a more holistic development opportunity for the candidates; leading to the developmentof overall coaching practice (Cushion *et al*., 2012).

The final element of reflective practice discussed by the coach educators included reflecting whilst performing an action or reflecting-in-action. Throughout the interview process the educators highlighted that when they were practically delivering coaching demonstrations,or teaching with the classroom setting, they were constantly evaluating various elements of the session. Constant evaluating displays action with those who hold greater self-awareness (e.g. Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gilbert & Côté, 2013); which may be a level of self-awareness yet to be held by the grassroots soccer coaches attending the course. Variables such as the content, levelof depth, how participants were reacting, questions being asked and the quality of the delivery,both practically and academically, were described as triggers for reflecting-in-action to take place. The coach educators outlined the importance of being proactive with their delivery, which meant evaluating the sessions whilst in progress. When giving focus to the grassroots candidates, the coach educators did not highlight any specific, structured practices taught throughout the course. Such findings correlate with previous work which note that practitionersrarely formalise the process of reflecting-in-action (Wain, 2017). However, through the use ofquestioning, coach educators may stimulate reflecting-in-action, should the grassroots candidate be providing information or delivering a session at the time which may stimulate thequestioning of their values, beliefs and knowledge (Cushion 2016; Fendler, 2003). Yet, this may be at a surface level rather than in a critical fashion (Cushion, 2016; Downham & Cushion, 2020). This process facilitates the coaches considering their own, intuitive feelings and knowledge along with undertaking live assessment of their own practice, leading to stimulatingchanges if necessary (Schön, 1983/1987). Opportunities to develop proactive, self-aware coaches may be developed through a more formal, structured approach in terms of teaching reflecting-in-action in depth, within delivered course content.

What was found to be similar was the standpoints on non-formal and in-formal learning by both research and the coach educators. Research outlines that 'folk' pedagogies underpin the aforementioned learning formats (Cushion, 2013). Correspondingly, the interviewed coach educators acknowledged that coaching knowledge and practice is developed in such learning moments. Coaches then find themselves in situations where they are interpreting their experiences in a way that fits their philosophical standpoint (Cushion *et al*., 2003; Gilbert & Trudel 2001; Gould, *et al*., 1990). Although the coach educators acknowledged that issues lie

with such pedagogical practices, they also felt such interactions were necessary to provide support for the grassroots coaches. This was due to the coach educator's being unable to personally support the coaches themselves due to time constraints.

An aspect examined by the present study found similarities to the previous work, in thatthe coach educators felt some of their core objectives didn't include the delivery of in-depth technical or tactical knowledge (Cushion *et al*., 2003). Outlined as against the learning culture (Abraham *et al*., 2010), the current work displays conflicting findings in that the approach to learning in terms of a combination of teaching styles, theoretical and practical workshop designs provided a full and holistic approach to learning. The workforce interviewed highlighted up to date methods which outlined a more informal approach to coach development. Additionally, the educator's outlined their desire for workshops to be coach-led, discussion focused and developmental in an informal environment, providing similar evidenceof findings to previous work (Abraham *et al*., 2010). The present study did not align with the previous research found (Cushion, *et al*., 2017; Piggot, 2012; Blackett, *et al*., 2015), which outlined a prescriptive model of coach education was provided for candidates. Contrastingly, the coach educators described student-focused activities such as group work, discussions and coaching observations. The role of the coach educator holds upmost importance with regards to the development of candidate knowledge, prolonged motivation and the experiencing of positive learning moments (Nelson *et al*., 2012; Reid & Harvey, 2014), which was certainly the case of the thesis presented. It should be noted, however, there was little flexibility in termsof delivered content.

When considering reflection, Schön, (1983/87) outlined that reflective practice could take place in-action and on-action, with Gilbert and Trudel (2001) adding retrospective reflection-on-action as a third element of the reflective process. The coach educators outlined that reflective practice took place within the course; however, this was only ever at the end of practical sessions or as a group in a discussion format after a theoretical session. Furthermore, the coach educators did not outline that any reflective practice was undertaken either in-actionor retrospectively as outlined by Schön (1983/87) and Gilbert and Trudel (2001), respectively.

When giving thought to the varying philosophies, values, beliefs, and additional considerations both discussed and on display throughout the present thesis, we have produced an unexhaustive list of key skills and characteristics evidenced by those within this study. Our intention is to aid in the effective development of upcoming coach educators and their ability to educate grassroots coaches, successfully. Split into three core elements, we have outlined that characteristics are associated with how coach educators interact with others, how coach

educators practically undertake their roles and finally the personal philosophies and values the coach educator holds.

As sport coaching researchers, we have spent the past 6 years gaining a detailed understanding of grassroots coaching, through the eyes of both grassroots coaches and coach educators. What we have seen is a collected agreement between the two samples that great coaching is putting those who are the focus, first. For example, in the world of coach education this refers to grassroots coaches and for the active coaches this is their participants. We have also noted that the environment created for each respective participant is vital in terms of their ability to connect and understand what they are trying to learn and love. Both coaches and coach educators require an ability to produce an experience and environment for their participants that actively listen and understand what they need and want from their time in soccer, in the context of this study.

Once an individual has behaviours that reflect such requirements, they begin to gain an understanding of what, how and why they do the thing they do.

Personal Philosophy

1. Philosophy and Value – Allow a clear synergy between your personal philosophy and coaching philosophy. Be consistent and constantly assess whether your philosophy is being realised practically.
2. Development – Continuously utilise reflection and CPD opportunities to improve practice.
3. Collaborative – Look to mentors, courses and critical friends for feedback to enhance delivery. Look to play this role for others too.

Interaction

4. Communication – Consider tone, questioning and focus of conversations. Making sure examples are relevant to the audience and adds value to them.
5. Encourage – Look to be an example and role model for others, in how you act and how you contribute.
6. Associations – Look to create positive relationships with individuals, not matter what background or ability. Be empathetic and understanding of their personal circumstances.

Practice

7. Feedback – Aim to deliver feedback in a relevant and constructive manner, whilst actively reflecting on own practice.
8. Practice – Look to ensure synergy between philosophy and practice, along with ensuring participants remain challenged and engaged throughout all elements of the coach education process.

9. Planning – Effectively plan and link session objectives to outcomes, whilst also providing a clear through process between how planned activities and sessions link.
10. Technical Knowledge – Display confidence in the delivering of all sessions, providing bespoke and individualised activities, depending on the group and course requirements.

We hope that this detailed breakdown of key characteristics provides The FA and additional national governing bodies with guidance when considering the recruitment process of coach educators, whilst also ensuring similar attributes and considerations are applied to content delivered within the coach education system. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, however it is hoped that this outline with stimulate reflection in both upcoming and established coach educators. There is, of course, room for interpretation and we hope that this list enables a new level of reflective criticality to be reached by those who are educating those within grassroots coaching.

As the present study focuses on the coach educator, the minimal scholarly activity concentrating on this area has been developed, as called for by Cushion *at al*., (2017). The roleof coach education, from the perspective of the coach educator, provides a distinctly different consideration given the present study's focus on examining the grassroots coach educator (Abraham *et al*., 2013). Research has noted that given the lack of research regarding such a role, it could be considered invisible (Cushion *et al*., 2017). However, the experiencespresented by the educators in terms of anecdotal stories, dealing with setbacks and overcoming various challenges alongside the depth of knowledge they provide, displays the importance of the educational position.

Research outlines that coach educators face an uphill battle in terms of overcoming obstacles such as pre-conceived perceptions of coaching within grassroots soccer (Coakley, 2016). This is in combination with the focus of technical and tactical strategies compared to philosophical and contextual issues arising within grassroot coaching (Holt, 2016). The present study found that the core issue discussed by the coach educators was the time spent with each candidate both on the course and in-situ. Furthermore, the coach educator's felt that if there was a greater focus on the role of reflection, they would not feel the need to spend as much time with the grassroots coach candidates in both contexts (course and in-situ), as the candidates could reflect fully without the need of coach educator guidance.

Given the differing careers held by the coach educators in the present study, all have progressed through the educational system in a similar fashion (Cushion *et al*., 2017). They will, therefore, have experienced certain situations that will have guided the development of their

values and beliefs (Hodkinson *et al*., 2008). That being said, the coach educators outline that the delivery is very prescriptive by their employer and therefore there is limited opportunity in terms of putting their own thoughts, feelings, values and beliefs into their theoretical work.

When considering limitations for the present study, it is important to acknowledge thatthe interviewees were employed by The English Football Association, and intentional or unintentional bias of the educators may have been present. Additionally, there were eight coach educators who took part in the present study, providing insight into coach education in grassroots soccer; however, a larger sample would be needed to generalise findings further. Asthis study was soccer focused, gaining a holistic view of coach education across several NGB'scould not be attempted or achieved.

In terms of recommending potential avenues of future research, the present study has provided a clear and concise overview of how current coach educator's perceive grassroots soccer coach education. A common theme throughout the study was the role of reflection in coach development. Suggestions were made regarding the implementing of reflective practice in-action, on-action and retrospectively on-action would provide an opportunity for grassroots coaches to develop their own practice rather than being solely coach educator lead. This would ease this pressure on them and reduce the concerns raised about time spent with each candidate. Therefore, a recommendation for future research would be to design an intervention with grassroots coaches with regards to the undertaking of reflective practice on-action, in-action and retrospectively on-action to aid the development of their progress. Furthermore, gaining further insights into additional invasion game sports such as rugby, netball and hockey in a grassroots context would provide valuable insights into an area requiring greater focus.

6.5 Summary

This chapter undertook retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values, beliefs, and practices from the viewpoint of those delivering coach education within the same context. Eight coach educators partook in interviews with the intention of gaining aninsight into their thoughts and feelings surrounding how to support grassroots coaches, but also enhance coach education. Once transcribed verbatim, the interviews underwent a thematic analysis, with the eventual development of sub-categories and final themes. The findings provided unique insights into the current perceptions of coach education, with themes coveringthe Coach Educator journey, the role of the Coach Educator, the development of coaching knowledge, the challenges within coach education, post course coach development and

opportunities to improve coach education. Findings suggest that the role of reflection, if enhanced, would be a positive step for both coach education and grassroots soccer coaches. The incorporation of such practices would enable coaches to effectively, and critically,consider their own practice and how their philosophy aligns to their behaviours and activities. Inthe case of the coach educators, given the stresses on the workforce, such tools would allow coaches to development themselves, rather than requiring the constant support of educators.

6.6 Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate the thoughts and opinions of expert coach educators from within The Football Association regarding coach education and the grassroots coaches' values, beliefs and practices. In doing so, the emergence of greater importance placed on reflection was noted. Such emphasis would further enhance and continually develop grassroots coaching, whilst provide further movement away from the prescriptive past of coach education. A greater focus on the role of reflection would provide the coaches with an opportunity to be autonomous in their development. By examining strategies that they have previously implemented, grassroots coaches could construct ways to overcome over dilemmas, problems and issues associated with their coaching, whether that be their practice or their process. Given the calls for additions to the coach education workforce, should a greater point be made of the role of reflection, the need for such additions may not be quite so urgent. This would be due to the self-development the newly educated grassroots coaches would beschooled in. Additionally, as communities of practice have been called for (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nelson & Cushion, 2006), such a process would enable coaches with similar mindsets to meet, share practice and help each other implement reflective practice to aid their own development and share resources. Furthermore, this reflective focus would provide a commondenominator for grassroots coaches and a figure head, such as an experienced mentor or a Coach Educator to meet and discuss concepts. This direction could lead the group in conversations, discussions, tasks and peer assessment. With grassroots coaches developing theability to critically reflect on their coaching experiences, a greater opportunity would exist to develop their self-awareness. An understanding with regards to how the context, knowledge base and philosophy can impact their coaching practice could effectively be developed. This process would then provide a window into the coaches' behaviours and reasoning for their coaching, and more opportunities for coaches to develop in a safe, supportive learningenvironment leading to greater reflection and their more appropriate practical coaching delivery.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A comparative review of the differences between grassroots soccer coaches and grassroots soccer coach educators: an evaluation of contrasting philosophies based on their experiences in life and sport.

7.1 Introduction

The role of coach development has been highlighted as essential for the enhancement of sport coaching provisions (Cushion *et al*., 2003). As such, coaches have a plethora of support systems available to them of both a formal and informal nature (Mallet, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009). What lies at the heart of sport coaching and the education that supports it are the wider influences such as social pressures and constraints (Armour & Jones, 2000). This is the case with all activities which are focused on human behaviour which Cushion *et al* (2003) denoted as multifaceted: '…complex multivariate, interpersonal and contested' considerations (p. 216). This stands true at all levels of sport including practice, values and meaning (Cross & Lyle, 1999). Often coaching behaviours are described as unique, almost impulse-like (Woodman, 1993), however this has been mooted as a simplification of the coaching process, (Lyle, 2002).

A problematic element of coaching is the perception that successful coaches are born with the required skill sets, rather than them being fostered in a classroom or other learning environments (Cushion *et al*., 2003). If it is accepted that much of coach development is a conscious act, then there is a need for a greater understanding of what underpins that development and subsequent coaching practice. One such consideration is the need for coaches to articulate their personal coaching philosophy as this has been highlighted as important given its underpinning influence on practice (Carless & Douglas, 2011). Indeed, coaching philosophy has been flagged as the foundations of a coach's coaching practice (Jenkins, 2010). If an identified coaching philosophy has not been developed yet, a coach's practice is shaped unconsciously by their values and beliefs. This may have negative consequences when coaches are faced with new scenarios or challenges, given that these coaches do not fully understand 'why' they do what they do (Carless & Douglas, 2011). Kidman and Hanrahan (1997) noted that when a personal coaching philosophy has been developed and articulated, coaches take an active interest in understanding how their values and beliefs are mirrored in their practice. Therefore, the need to understand how knowledge is developed, in alignment with philosophical considerations is clear. This is further emphasised by Cassidy *et al's* (2009) justification that a coaching philosophy holds importance as it provides a stance for personal reflection and

evaluation:

> …clearly articulating one's philosophy is a prerequisite to good practice, as it provides direction and focus in relation to how one goes about doing the job of coaching' (p. 55).

Given the general, and abstract, nature of coaching philosophy statements, coaches can find observing, establishing, and linking philosophy to their lived and personal experiences challenging (Carless & Douglas, 2011). Given this concern, Carless & Douglas (2011) suggested that the most straightforward way for coaches to align their personal coaching philosophy with their practice would be to develop a set of statements that can be applied to various contexts. These would then guide an individual's practice (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). A common issue within grassroots sport is that coaches feel that they should hold a desire to develop and improve those they work with; yet they also display behaviours aligned to winning (Jenkins, 2010). Previous work by Vealey (2005) noted that misaligned practice and philosophy is not an uncommon theme within sport coaching. This paper highlighted concerns about how philosophies are developed and translated into the physical world of coaching. Critics of coach education have noted that there is not a big enough focus on the context of pressures faced daily when developing a coaching philosophy (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). This leads to a rigid, inflexible set of statements which can be difficult to truly apply to practice.

As highlighted throughout the thesis, a further challenge faced by coaches and coach educators alike is the ability to turn values and beliefs into practical activities, although mature and experienced coaches have had greater success with this when compared to novice coaches (Carless & Douglas, 2011). In fact, as these authors have also suggested that one of the more challenging elements of development is that of being able to articulate a coaching philosophy. To begin to close the gulf that currently exists between what we know and understand about practice (what we do) and personal beliefs and values, there is a need to gain a greater awareness of why coaches do what they do. This can then be compared to coach educators' practice to identify and examine synergies and contrasting elements.

One area of research that remains under-examined includes that of direct comparisons of those who coach within grassroots soccer and those who are currently coach educators within grassroots soccer. When considering opportunities to enhance coach education within the United Kingdom, gaining an understanding of how coach educators developed expertise with specific reference to their experiences, beliefs, and values fostered would provide a unique insight into the similarities and differences of those actively coaching within grassroots soccer. Comparing and contrasting coaches' philosophies versus coach educators' philosophies, based on their experiences in life and sport, will provide greater understanding of the development of expertise.

Additionally, it should also give indications of how coach educators seek to shape the next generation of grassroots coaches. Connecting coaches' values, for both coaches and educators, may highlight the benefits of the various forms of learning and the different key points of their respective coaching journey. This may provide an opportunity to strategically enhance coach ed and CPD from a research-informed perspective.

Coach education has been criticized for imposing a set of rigid rules and models for coaches to follow (Mesquita, Ribeiro, Santos & Morgan, 2014), contrasting the requirements for gaining expertise in a subject. Those authors have highlighted that the development of expertise is influenced by the interactive and situational nature of coaching experiences (Mesquita *et al*., 2014). In fact, expertise has stronger links to day-to-day practical experiences than education courses (Cushion *et al*., 2003). In addition to personal experiences, peer to peer learning and regular knowledge-sharing has also been cited as important for coach development (Jones *et al*., 2004). Therefore, gaining an understanding into how the coaching journeys of coach educators and coaches compare and contrast may provide a unique understanding into how grassroots coaches and coach education can further be supported. An interesting element would examine the two separate coaching stakeholders (coach educators and grassroots coaches), regarding their lifelong learning. For example, a comparison of when certain life events occurred, their backgrounds regarding playing history, schooling and extra-curricular activities would enable a comparison to be made regarding their initial start point, although defining this objectively may be challenging.

To begin to address limitations of the literature, one of the roles of the sports coaching researcher is to investigate the biographies of coaches and coach educators, along with what they do, and how they do it. This will also give insight into the knowledge of practitioners (what coaches know), their practice activities and coaching behaviours (what they do), and their critical reflections (why they do what they do). Alongside insight into their practical behaviours and activities such investigations will further inform coach education.

As such, this study intends to answer the following research question:

> RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between grassroots soccer coaches and grassroots soccer coach educators, regarding their coach philosophies based on their experiences in life and sport?

7.2 Method

This final element of the thesis employed qualitative, semi-structured interviews with both coach educators and grassroots coaches. Interviews were completed to develop new

knowledge that could positively shape development of both the academic body of research as well as the role coach education plays in grassroots coach development (Jones & Wallace, 2005). This pragmatic approach to data collection was undertaken, followed by a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interviews focused on the backgrounds of the coach educators and coaches, specifically their life experiences, early sporting experiences, academic and work experiences, along with philosophical components such as their values and beliefs.

The study involved both coach educators (n=8) and grassroots coaches (n=8). The coach educators were employed either full-time or part-time by the FA. For a full breakdown of the participant information, biographies, inclusion criterion, age, and experience, please refer to Table 4.1 (Chapter 4 – grassroots coaches) and Table 6.1 (Chapter 6 – coach educators).

Design and Procedure

The University of Northumbria Ethics Committee granted ethic approval for the study and a sample of 16 participants (12 male, 4 female) was recruited through purposive sampling. Given the background of the researcher (a prominent coaching figure within the subject area), his access to 'gatekeepers' and their subsequent network of coaches and coach educators suitable for the study (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Upon agreeing to take part in the study, participants were provided with appropriate documentation, including a Participant Information Sheet All coaches completed a Generic Informed Consent Form and a Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent Form. Please refer to Appendix B (Grassroots Coaches) and Appendix D (Coach Educators) for a breakdown of all documentation provided. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to help maintain their anonymity. To ensure that the interview schedule (Appendix B) was appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study, a pilot interview was completed. This process enabled the researcher to gauge whether questions were presented consistently, whilst also being clear and defined (Hassan *et al*., 2006).

Following completion of Informed Consent Forms, the participants provided convenient times and locations for the interviews to take place. Due to varying geographical locations of the participants, interviews were completed via telephone and recorded via a digital voice recorder (Sony ICD- BX140 Digital Voice Recorder) before being transcribed *verbatim*. This approach provided the candidates with opportunities for discussion and allowed for a richer understanding to be gained from the responses of the participants. Probes were used by the interviewer to gain greater depth and detail. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes (per participant).

Members checks were completed with the aim of developing the validity of the

study (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. Data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Smith & McGannon, 2017).

Data Analysis

Six stages of deductive thematic analysis were completed, and a full breakdown of the thematic analysis process is detailed in Chapter 4. As an overview, firstly, extensive reading, note taking and examinations were completed on all eight transcripts, prior to outlining the identified the topic. Next, the lead researcher, looked to develop and consolidate categories regarding relevance, leading to the development of candidate themes. The following step was the refinement of the themes, leading to the defining of each theme. Finally, the findings were written up. Following the completion of a thematic analysis, three core themes were developed, in alignment with the requirements of Braun and Clarke (2019).

7.3 Results

For this next chapter, the following abbreviations for 'Grassroots Coach' (GC) and 'Coach Educator' (CE) have been deployed to ensure a succinct approach to writing could be achieved. As per the aim of this chapter, the themes are focussed around how both the grassroots coaches and coach educators perceived their experiences in soccer, with special attention given to their life and work experiences, their coaching journey, and their respective values, beliefs, and practices as coaches. All second order categories and final themes can be observed within Table 7.1. The three final themes are Life and Work Experiences, The Coaching Journey and Underpinning Coaching Considerations.

Table 7.1 Second Order Categories and Final Themes

Second Order Category	Final Themes
Professional Backgrounds	Theme One Life and Work Experiences
Family and Home Life	
Extra-curricular Interests	
Reasons for Coaching	Theme Two The Coaching Journey
Challenges Faced	
Coach Education	
Coaching Philosophies	Theme Three Underpinning Coaching Considerations
Coaching Behaviours and Practices	

Life and Work Experiences

The first theme generated was the underlying life and work experiences of the participants. Multiple elements were identified including professional backgrounds, family and home life, and extra-curricular interests all with the intention of comparing and contrasting the varying results of both grassroots coaches and coach educators. A variety of professions were showcased. However, it is the ranging, often complementary, skills held, and activities undertaken, by the varying two groups (grassroots coaches and coach educators) that brings insight. For example, Roy (CE) noted that within his role as a Coach Educator he has a variety of administrative tasks, '…key tasks including communication and management'. This was also voiced by Greig (GC):

> Yeah, so my day to day is very hands on in terms of management. As almost the leader of the company I tend to be the one on the phone organising people, managing different sites and making sure we are on track to get the days tasks done. (Greig, GC)

Further similarities were evident between, Caroline (CE), a Regional Coach Educator, and Tom, a Grassroots Coach. Firstly, Caroline said that her role involved lots of travel and thinking time:

> You know, I do love the job, but it does involve a lot of time on the road. That can be a good thing though because I can be proactive and make lots of phone calls. It also gives me my own space and a bit of time to reflect on my day or the delivery of whatever course I've just been at. As my role is regional, I can be 2-3 hours away from home but, like I say, that gives me a lot of time to be productive and reflective. (Caroline, CE)

Although relating more to time-management, Caroline has clearly devised a system to get the most out of her enforced travelling to undertake important reflection. Similarly, Tom notes that he has also utilised opportunities to engage in productive activities:

> …a lot of my time is spent managing huge national parks. I am talking 60 plus acres of land, and what I find is that I can be by myself for large portions of the day, especially when I am doing site visits. Which I suppose for those I work with is probably a good thing ha-ha. But for me, it gives me lots of opportunity to be going over bits and pieces. Lots of me time I guess, which is quite nice really, but lonely at times too. (Tom, GC)

There were, however, differences between a number of grassroots coaches and coach educators, in terms of the daily activities they undertake in their professional lives such as office-based work compared to the practical nature of the coach educators. Firstly, Mark (GC) and Paul (GC), who are both grassroots coaches, differed when compared to Adrian (CE) and Julie (CE) who are both full-time professional coach educators who tended to have a lot more variety in their daily tasks such as conference attendance, delivering coach education at differing venues and interacting with lots of new people. Mark began by outlining his core daily activities which included appointments, paperwork and working from an office:

> I suppose my daily activities may seem a little mundane to some, but I enjoy it which is the main thing. I have 1-to-1 client appointments throughout the day, but then it is a lot of paperwork and research. I really enjoy working on complex, challenging cases. My role doesn't lead me into a court room, it is more administrative. (Mark, GC)

Similarly, Paul noted that his role can mean he is working individually for long periods of time:

> My role is very much desk based. I can be sitting in my office for 10-12 hours per day and literally not speak to anyone. I obviously have 1 or 2 staff to manage, but I just work through things like audits, taxes, and that kind of thing. (Paul, GC)

Contrastingly, Adrian and Julie, both of whom are coach educators, highlight that they prefer to be more active on a day-to-day basis, interacting with as many people as possible:

> I think for me, the part of my own job I love the most is the interaction. I spend my full week meeting 20-30 new course applicants for around 40 weeks of the year, and then the other part is made up of things like conferences, team meetings and my own CPD. There are more laborious tasks such as the paperwork involved, but it is very worth it considering how I spend the rest of the time. (Adrian, CE)

Julie further outlines the varying differences between some of the coaches and the coach educators when discussing the elements of her role she enjoys, such as interactions, meeting new people and the wide variety of daily activities undertaken in her role:

> I think something that I really enjoy is certainly the sorts of activities I undertake every day. Being a coach educator, I am obviously leading a course, delivering sessions, taking classrooms workshops, you know, very interactive things. I really enjoy the diverse type of individuals who I encounter so there is never a day that is the same as the day before. (Julie, CE)

Additional themes including family and home life were also identified by the coaches and coach educators. What was evident was that they enjoyed relaxing at home with family and friends, with no real discrepancies between the two. When giving consideration to what this means for the varying roles, coaches tended to be focused on being present with their family, with no thoughts on reflecting on previous sessions, developing their practice or growing their knowledge. For example, Stephen, who has a son and daughter, said:

> If I'm not coaching with my son, I tend to be in the house with my wife and daughter watching movies or playing. The kids are still at that age where there is a load of toys everywhere and playing with that stuff, and them, is a lovely way to spend an afternoon. (Stephen, GC)

None of the grassroots coaches highlighted that spending additional free time taking part or observing sport was of great interest to them:

> To be honest I'm not that sporty. I never played sport growing up so most of my time is spent relaxing in front of the TV or reading one of those crime novels. (Clive, GC)

However, the coach educators gave differing responses, noting that they were always immersed in sport in some way, which both consciously and unconsciously, impacted their awareness of their own practice. The coach educators discussed how their free time included an element of sport, matching their professional role:

> I know I work in football, but I just love it. I play for my local women's team, but I also have a season ticket with Everton [FC]. So yes, you could say I am very football, football, football ha-ha. A lot of the time I'm actually watching and learning from the coaches I play for and watch professionally. It's not often you can access these people like I can. (Emma, CE)

Several coach educators discussed similar things giving the impression that the coach educators are constantly looking to enhance their practice, such as Andy:

> I am massively into running so I tend to hit a 5 or 10km most days and maybe even a half-marathon every Sunday. To be fair my wife is into running as well so it is kind of a family activity. But saying that, when I do head out, I normally flick on a podcast featuring professional players or coaches, and you can bet once the miles start ticking by, I will be reflecting on my own practice and how I can implement what I am hearing on the podcast. (Andy, CE)

The Coaching Journey

The next theme drawn from the analysis was the individual coaching journey of the participants. Three key elements were depicted including the participants' reasons for coaching, the various challenges faced throughout the participants' coaching journeys and the participants' experience of undertaking formal coach education. There was an even split when the reasoning for the individual's interest in coaching was considered with personal ambition and necessity being evenly split as responses. For example, the majority of the coach educators noted that they had always had a desire to have a professional role within coaching:

> For me, I always knew what I wanted to do really so it was a natural progression from university. In fact, I completed level 1 [certificate] while I was still doing my degree. (Ryan, CE)

Most of the coach educators outlined similar reasons for initially getting involved as coaches, however Paul's response stands out given how he came to the decision to pursue a career in coaching:

> I just loved everything about helping people to be honest and I thought this was a very worthwhile use of my time. I loved sport, always have, and when I knew I might not play at the level I wanted to it became all about coaching for me. (Paul, CE)

Although holding interests in sport, both Andy and Roy highlight that they may have gone down other paths professionally, but would always have had a desire to coach:

> As I discussed before, I was a Police Officer for many years, so I didn't necessarily have immediate ambitions of working in sport professionally. I was a part-time academy coach though throughout that time. For me I really enjoy working with the players. Seeing youngsters progress gives me a real reason to get up every day. (Andy, CE)

Roy too noted that the opportunity to help individuals progress is what underpins his professional ambitions:

> To be honest I always knew I wanted to work in sport but that was kind of down to not being very good at anything else ha-ha. Something I think I am good at though is helping players and I enjoy it too which is a bonus. (Roy, CE)

When examining the grassroots coaches, their journey towards a coaching role was not as certain, as Bill explained:

> To be honest I wouldn't have become a coach if my little lad hadn't started playing. In fact, I know very little about football in all honesty. I just want my son and his friends to have fun. (Bill, GC)

Dan outlined the possible closure of his son's sports team as a key moment regarding his initial need to start his coaching journey:

> My sons' team was going to fold as there was no one to take the team. I know how much my boy and the rest of them lot enjoy it so I said I would do it. I must admit it's not something I ever thought I would do really as I was more a rugby player. But if it keeps the team going then that will do me. (Dan, GC)

The next element that warranted further exploration was the varying challenges faced by the professional coach educators and those in voluntary grassroots coaching roles. Key elements that surfaced from this section of the analysis was that the challenges varied depending on the group. For example, coach educators faced obstacles relating to opportunities to get certain roles and achieve certain career progression, whereas coaches faced more short-term challenges such as logistical challenges. Caroline highlighted one of the challenges that she confronted as an ambitious coach educator:

> I think my main challenge was the competition when vacancies came up. I think I interviewed for the role I have now about 3 times and that was in different regions. You can imagine the relief when I was successful. I think that has been my main challenge, although I suppose the workload is quite high, but I enjoy planning and the reflection so that's not so much of a challenge. (Caroline, CE)

Ryan noted that obstacles included things an appropriate developmental pathway and subsequent opportunities to enhance my employment, rather than coaching-related challenges:

> For me the main challenge in coach education is things like the pay and being able to move up the ladder quickly. You can get qualified pretty quickly, but you can only move up in the organisation if there is a gap to do that. Sometimes you might have to move down the country as there isn't loads of opportunities up here. (Ryan, CE)

Contrastingly, grassroots coaches faced differing challenges such as logistics associated with organising training and equipment, ensuring fair playing time and balancing home-life, work and volunteering, as Mark said:

> One of the hardest things is just getting through the week. There is a load of stuff we have to do that you wouldn't think of. Things like organising training, getting the kit there, making sure everyone is contacted and getting planned for the session. But then there are things like contacting the opposition, organising refs, sending out meeting times, getting the paperwork done like team sheets and that sort of thing. It's a lot to remember to be honest and its quite challenging. (Clive, GC)

Mark also outlined challenges faced with his work-life balance:

> I think, for me anyway, balancing everything is hard. Obviously, I have a family, a full-time job, kids to play with, relaxation time ideally along with the coaching stuff so balancing all that is a bit tricky. Especially if my wife has some activities, she wants to do things can get a bit complicated and stressful. (Mark, GC)

The final category of this theme reflected experiences of coach education. Both groups felt that the formal element of the courses was useful but completed simply to get the desired qualification:

> I think the main reason I wanted to get my qualifications was to learn something obviously, but it was also a requirement of the club. It has been interesting though but once I got what I needed I didn't feel the need to try and get any more. (Mark, GC)

Julie, a coach educator, had similar thoughts, in that she knew she knew that formal qualifications needed to be completed to facilitate professional progression:

> Well, I always knew it was something I would have to do, given where I hoped I would end up professionally. I actually prefer to deliver courses than to be one of the candidates so it was almost a need must if I'm honest. Obviously, I enjoyed them, but I wanted to get the certificates as quickly as possible to enable my career progression. (Julie, CE)

When considering the actual course delivery, student-centred approaches seemed to be well received. Both the coach educators and the grassroots coaches also noted that when courses take a less-prescriptive approach more benefit is felt.:

> I think, like in any walk of life, you want to be involved in the process, and have your thoughts taken into consideration. That wasn't always the case on the courses I did. It always seemed a bit like our voice didn't matter as we were just grassroots coaches, but maybe I am being too harsh. (Grieg, GC)

Adrian, brings to life his own experiences of being a participant, particularly highlighting the role of the coach educator to provide an engaging teaching style:

> From my view, I always enjoyed the course, and I had some really engaging tutors who put challenging questions to us. They would then challenge our answers and really make us think, you know, really put the onus on us to come up with creative responses. (Adrian, CE)

Underpinning Coaching Considerations

The final element of the grassroots coaches and coach educators results that were particularly noteworthy focused on their underpinning coaching considerations. For example, coaching philosophies, behaviours, and practices were all discussed by the coach educators and the grassroots coaches. In general, the coach educators all had similar coaching philosophies, which could be down to the fact they all work within the same organisation (The FA) in either a full or part-time role. For example, Paul said that a big part of his coaching philosophy is being player-focused:

> My coaching philosophy is all about the players. Let them have as much of the ball as possible, in all sorts of different scenarios and situations. Let them make mistakes and learn. (Paul, CE)

Andy also placed the participants at the centre of his coaching philosophy:

> For me it is all about ensuring that the kids enjoy what they are doing and really get to experience the football. Too many coaches take the ball away from the players, whereas I want them to touch the ball as much as possible. My philosophy is to be there as a sort of safety net but to also be that person that challenges them. I would say that this is also how I try to interact in my role as a coach educator, which is something I've never really considered. (Andy, CE)

The grassroots coaches, on the other hand, did have slightly more varied coaching philosophies incorporating elements of winning and competition into their daily tasks, along with developing their players as people:

> I think I have mentioned it a few times to be fair, but I just love to win. To come off the pitch beating your opponent and I guess my under lying philosophy is that I am going to do anything and everything within my power to do that. I just try and tell my players as much as possible. (Paul, GC)

When compared to Paul's practical coaching, instruction is scored the highest, outlining that he spends a lot of time dictating information to his participants (Appendix C7). When considering the practical sessions completed, the lead researcher notes that the sessions undertaken were very structured, with minimal creativity, mirroring his above statement. Greig's coaching philosophy did not replicate that of Paul's, however, instead claimed to place the participants being coached at the heart of the learning process through positive interventions:

> My whole coaching philosophy is centred around the aim of making sure the kids have fun and love coming to football. I only work with 8-year-olds so anything more structured than that at this stage, for me, just wouldn't sit well. I just want them to laugh, smile and have fun.

When examining Greig's previously completed practical coaching (see Chapter 5), Greig's highest score, relating to coaching behaviours, were instruction (Appendix C7), it could be argued that there was a disconnect between his coaching philosophy and practical coaching practice. Another grassroots coach, Clive, highlighted that he simply wants to help his players:

> With regards to my own coaching philosophy, I guess you could say I want to try and help the players as much as I can. I remember on one of the courses I did they said to use questions and I really liked that. I try to get as much information out of the players as possible and ask a tonne of questions really. (Clive, GC)

When looking into the practical activities delivered by Clive, it was clear that a positive learning environment was set, with players happy to take risks and be creative. Furthermore, the coach actively looked to engage his participants with questions, which is corroborated by being the coach with the highest score across the grassroots coaches, when

focusing on questioning (Appendix C7).

7.4 Discussion

The present study focused on grassroots coaches and coach educators', evaluating, and contrasting the varying philosophies held between the two groups, along with their respective experiences in life and sport. Undertaking interviews with the varying samples enabled the lead researcher to gain an understanding of the encounters experienced at differing stages of coaches' journeys. The findings presented several similarities between the grassroots coaches and coach educators, including having a passion for sport and being interested in helping others. However, a number of differences were also visible, including what influenced the reasoning behind the coaches' initial steps into taking part in coach education. More specifically, the semi-structured interviews highlighted that grassroots coaches in this study had limited interest in sport, outside of their coaching role, compared to professional coaches for whom sport seemed to underpin many of their experiences, personally and professional.

Considering that coach development has been discussed as essential through the role of coach education (Cushion *et al*., 2003), it was insightful to learn that most of the grassroots coaches were reluctant to undertake further courses and developmental opportunities. My findings indicated that coaches only participated in education to meet the requirements of Charter Standard grassroots clubs. A Charter Standard grassroots club aims to raise standards in the grassroots game through supporting the development of clubs and leagues. It also recognises and rewards commitment, quality and achievement. The award demonstrates that the club offer well-run and sustainable football whilst also prioritising qualified coaching and safeguarding, as well as the values of The FA's Respect programme as part of their game (The FA Charter Standard, 2021). However, coach educators outlined their intense desire to achieve qualifications as this underpinned their professional ambitions and possible achievements.

At the heart of coach development are complexities that underpin and affect grassroots coaches' development, in both formal and informal settings such as time constraints, beliefs, and previous experiences (Mallet *et al*., 2009). In addition, a multitude of social constraints, pressures, and influences have been highlighted as needing consideration, given the varying effect such variables can have on meaning, practice and values (Armour & Jones, 2000). These factors were reinforced by several of the participants, who have outlined differing social situations. For example, the grassroots coaches outlined that they did not participate much in sport when they were younger. So, this avenue to coaching was not open to them. In fact, if they were not related to a child participating, they may not have participated in coaching at all. Contrastingly, the coach educators outlined that they were immersed in sport from a very young

age, often participating in multiple sports and being high achievers in school-based subjects such as Physical Education. Furthermore, this interest seems to have transitioned into their adult lives, with a number of the coach educators emphasising that in their free time they attended live sports matches, take part in amateur teams, or watch their own children undertake sporting activities. What seems to be evident from the findings is that sporting experiences, whether professional or personal, underpin the lives of the coach educators. However, for the grassroots coaches' sport plays a lesser part in the daily lives, with varying interests, unrelated professional jobs and developing further opportunities within sport being of minimal importance.

Turning to how knowledge was developed, this study intended to explore and compare coaching philosophies grassroots coaches, and those of grassroots coach educators. Being able to articulate a personal coaching philosophy has been noted as key component of providing coaches with a framework that can be applied in practical settings (Jenkins, 2010). When focusing on the grassroots coaches included in the present study, several themes emerged from the transcribed data. Included amongst those were coaching philosophies that focused on success in terms of winning matches. There was little consideration of players' development or the notion of encouraging lifelong learning among the participants being coached (the young players). Furthermore, some of coaches did not indicate any particular intentions of ensuring that fun or enjoyable experience was had by their young charges, instead focusing on outcome-based goals. That being said, this stance was not universal with some of the coaches indicating their desire to prioritise fun and enjoyable environments in their sessions. These coaches made no reference to outcomes such as winning, and instead only had intentions of facilitating positive experiences for those with whom they were working. Further comparison of grassroots coaches and coach educators presented a number of similarities. For example, both groups stated that a main intention was to educate their players effectively. Such findings highlight how a personal philosophy that is altruistic in nature can provide a locus for practice for among both coaches and coach educators. Further, the latter mirrors their own philosophies, values, and beliefs as coaches in their delivery as coach educators (Carless & Douglas, 2011).

Further examples of how coaching philosophies of those coaching within a grassroots context are articulated through the coaches' positive descriptions of environments, with key phrases such as 'learning environment', 'facilitation' and 'player-focused' being stated. However, when revisiting some of the previously detailed coaching behaviour data (see Appendix C7), it became apparent that there was a disconnect between what was being said and what was being practically delivered. A few coaches who spent time discussing how they provided participants with ownership of their own learning were rated highest for instructions,

and lowest for questioning. Similarly, in some cases, coaches who outlined their desire to establish a creative environment for their participants were delivering overly structured sessions with repetitive drills. These findings mirror those of Vealey (2005) who discussed that a misalignment between a coaching philosophy and coaching practice currently exists. The present study, however, found that such disconnects were not apparent among the coach educators. This may not be perceived as unusual, given their professional backgrounds and greater experience. For example, some of the coach educators discussed that they also had a coaching philosophy that placed the coaches with whom they were interacting within the heart of the learning process. Then they discussed examples of what this looked like in practice, such as question and answer sessions, group discussions and bespoke individual conversations. However, what should be noted at this point is none of the coach educators were observed during any practical delivery.

This chapter has gone some way in terms of identifying the current similarities and differences held by coach educators and grassroots coaches within the foundation phases of grassroots soccer. Given limited research of this topic, directly comparing active coaches and coach educators, this thesis has provided an original contribution to knowledge within the sport coaching research field. This chapter outlines that the key differences lie in the backgrounds and interests of the groups. Coach educators seem to be fully immersed in every aspect of sport, including participating, spectating, and working within sport. Contrastingly, grassroots coaches tend to be involved in sport for pragmatic reasons, such as to ensure a team can continue or to assist if a relative was also participating. When considering more philosophical contributions, grassroots coaches have an apparent disconnect between their coaching philosophies and their practical coaching practice. Through discussions, participants were able to adequately outline their coaching intentions, however, their practices did not necessarily mirror them. In comparison, the coach educators were able to discuss comfortably their coaching philosophies and intentions and how they would practically mirror this philosophy in a practical, coach education setting. Given that reflection and evaluation are aligned to a coaching philosophy, placing greater emphasis on reflection practice may be of use to grassroots coaches (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009). Incorporating reflective practice in greater detail throughout a grassroots coach learning journey would implore grassroots coaches to thoroughly contemplate elements of their coaching. This would include how their coaching philosophies may look in practice and if they are currently achieving this. Through key questioning, coaching could bring greater awareness to their actions, leading to a more aligned approach between philosophy and practice.

7.5 Summary

The intention of this element of the thesis was to complete a comparison reviewing

the differences between grassroots coaches and coach educators, evaluating and contrasting the coaching philosophies based on their experiences in life and sport. Deploying semi-structured interviews with 8 coach educators and 8 grassroots coaches intended to gain an understanding that could possibly enhance coach education. Data was thematically analysed, with 3 themes and 8 second order categories emerging. Findings indicate that coach educators are immersed with sport, including participating, spectating, and working within the sector. Grassroots coaches, however, only involve themselves with sport on a needs-must basis, and quite possibly would not participate, watch, or work in sport if certain circumstances did not lead them to get involved (e.g. participating child).

The current chapter provides a unique awareness of experiences, beliefs and values that operate within grassroots soccer, and more specifically coach education. From the findings, differences and similarities exist between those who are working professionally in soccer as coach educators and those who coach in a voluntary capacity. The main message to take away from the conclusions is the importance of acknowledging the role that coach educators can play in developmental process. Educators must ensure that the grassroots coaches are always kept at the centre of the learning process to ensure maximum engagement. Additionally, given the role of reflection in the learning process, coach educators must utilise techniques such as reflective practice to ensure all elements of coach education delivery are focused on the grassroots coaches to ensure engagement.

7.6 Conclusion

To conclude, coach education has been criticised for being ineffective and inflexible with regards to successfully supporting of coaches, in terms of both impacting on their learning and on sustained behavioural change (Trudel *et al*., 2010). Coach education is complex, incorporating dozens of varying backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences (Paquette *et al*., 2019). When coach educators actively work with grassroots coaches when delivering coach education, positive responses can be seen in terms of engagement and enjoyment. Such findings outline that when placing coaches at the centre of the learning process positive effects on their development and coach behaviours can be seen (Deek *et al*., 2013). To effectively ensure high engagement is being achieved within a formal education setting, coach educators should constantly monitor how the coaches are receiving their education. From this, educators can adjust accordingly in terms of relative examples and stimulating activities to keep the coach at the centre of the learning process. Coach educators should reflect on their ability to adjust and fine-tune the learning environment for the attending grassroots coaches, with the coaches' life and sport experiences and interests very much considered.

When considering the limitations of this study, although a range of perspectives were presented including grassroots coaches and coach educators, this was only contextualised within soccer. A greater understanding of grassroots coaching would be generated if opinions and perspectives from those within additional sports were studied. Examining sports including rugby, netball and basketball would provide a more-rounded understanding of how grassroots coaches and coach educators within invasion game sports compare. Additional limitations are also acknowledged, including that of data collection. Within the present study only interviews were actively undertaken. However, field notes and additional data from previous work supplemented the findings.

The presented work has implications for the wider coach education community, along with policy makers, practitioners, and other key stakeholders. Most notably, what was clear throughout the study was that a large degree of variance was visible when examining the coaches' and coach educators' philosophies, life, and sporting experiences. An opportunity for the role of reflection to play a more central role could be utilised. If done so, on a larger scale, educators would ensure that the learning environment created for the grassroots coaches during coach education is fine-tuned and constantly monitored and made relevant to the participants. This study has looked to contribute to the ever-expanding knowledge of coach education, alongside the bodies of work focusing on reflection and philosophy.

CHAPTER EIGHT
General Discussion

The intention of this general discussion chapter is to provide a critical evaluation of the core findings that have emerged and been drawn from the four studies undertaken as part of this thesis. The findings are compared to coaching practice across varying contexts whilst also making comparisons between the practitioners on the grass and the educators in the classroom. Furthermore, an insight into the role coach education may play in the enhancement ofgrassroots soccer coaches is provided. Within this section, limitations are presented in terms ofthe research design, in addition to the provision of practical implications and recommendationsfor future research. The ambitions of this thesis with regards to the findings developed is that they may be a timely contribution to the limited research in grassroots soccer coaching literature. The intent was to provide coach educators, sport coaches, key stakeholders and policy makers with an insight into the philosophies, behaviours and practices present within grassroots soccer.

Sport coaching has been researched in a range of sports, levels and contexts. Coaching practice is guided by traditional pedagogy (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Harvey, *et al*., 2010), the copying of others (Cushion, *et al*., 2003; Williams & Hodges, 2005; Ford *et al*., 2010) and coaching intuition (Cushion, *et al*., 2003). From the outset, research has highlighted that sports, notably soccer, are commonly coach-led and prescriptive in nature (Williams & Hodges, 2005; Potrac & Cassidy, 2006; Harvey *et al*., 2010). Furthermore, coaching behaviour can be influenced by experienced coaches (Partington & Cushion, 2013), and similarities in terms of practices are passed on through 'folk pedagogy' (Harvey *et al*., 2013), with instruction being outlined as a common behaviour displayed (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2007; Ford *et al*., 2010).

Coaching is a reactive process in a chaotic environment (Cushion, 2007), with game-like activities facilitating the closest opportunity to replicate real-life game experiences (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Harvey *et al*., 2010). In a contradicting fashion, research notes that coaches tend to approach sessions prescriptively rather than taking a disordered tactic (Ford *etal*., 2010). Ford and colleagues note that coaches held aspirations of undertaking the role of facilitator. However, this was not evident in practice, with similar findings being evident in the present thesis, highlighting limited awareness in terms of such objectives being met (See Chapter 4). As proposed by experienced scholars, examining coaching through further

empirical research, especially in individualised contexts, is required to gain an insight into theall-inclusivity of coaching (Potrac *et al*., 2002). Taking the route of exploration through gainingan awareness of how coaches aim to deliver their philosophy through coaching practice aimedto provide insight into the perceptions of grassroots soccer coaches. Elements such as values, beliefs, coaching intentions and justifications provide an understanding of what guides their practice, in terms of knowledge and experiences (Potrac *et al*., 2002; Smith & Cushion, 2006;Harvey *et al*., 2010).

Four specific research questions were devised to give a clear focus to the project:

RQ1: What are grassroots coaches' understandings of coaching philosophy with regards tothe shaping of their coaching practice?

RQ2: What coaching behaviours are evident within grassroots soccer coaches' coachingpractice?

RQ3: How do Coach Educator's perceive the role of coaching philosophy within grassrootssoccer?

RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between grassroots soccer coaches and grassroots soccer coach educators, regarding their coach philosophies based on their experiences in life and sport?

8.1 Originality of Thesis and Summary of Key Findings

The findings of the current thesis make several original contributions to the existing sport coaching literature. In summary, the studies utilised a combination of under examined research participants; grassroots soccer coaches coaching within the foundation phase. In addition, multiple viewpoints were gained in the forms of novel methodological approaches including interviews with grassroots soccer coaches, systematic coaching observations and coach educator interviews. As an overview, the main findings from within the four studies found that grassroots soccer coaches have the ambition of providing a creative environment fortheir participants. However, through past experiences and developed understanding, grassrootssoccer coaches tend to be very prescriptive in their coaching activities and behaviours, and donot mirror their philosophical stance.

Specifically, study one identified the lack of research within the field of sport coaching that focused on grassroots coaches. The findings suggest that there was no current research in circulation that focused on coaches' practice in a longitudinal manner, within this context (See Chapter Three). Based on this study alone, the present thesis served a useful purpose in terms of developing the extant sport coaching literature. Study two dove into the philosophies, valuesand

beliefs of grassroots coaches, revealing a depth of knowledge in terms of age-appropriate coaching practice (See Chapter Four). Coaches displayed awareness of academically supported practices and advocated a player-led experience. However, focusing on player development rather than success was conflicted between the coaches. Furthermore, ensuring the perceptionsof key stakeholders (e.g. parents) were positive, rather than focusing on the participant's development were evident in the findings. The study also gave insights in terms of impactful past experiences, most notably understandings emerged from their past playing experiences, previous mentors and strategies picked up from the senior professional game.

The intention of study three was to bring to life the grassroots soccer coaches' practice in the form of systematic coaching observations (See Chapter Five). The study highlighted that although initially the coaches had spoken of appropriate coaching methods within their interviews, on the field their practices were archaic and opposed that of coaches who are providing player-led experiences. Furthermore, findings outlined that coaches took a prescriptive approach to coaching with behaviours such as instruction being some of the most utilised within the observed practice. The study also highlighted the minimal role reflection plays in the coaching career of a grassroots soccer coach. Both in practice, post practice or retrospectively, with coaches spending minimal time preparing sessions, evaluating sessions mid-flow or spending time critically evaluating their delivery upon completion of theircoaching session.

Study four examined coach educators who outlined their own personal coaching journeys, values, beliefs and practices, whilst also summarising the current practices of courses delivered by The FA (See Chapter Six). When asked to suggest potential areas of development for coach education to enable greater support for those in grassroots coaching, the educators noted the potential of spending more time exploring, teaching and practicing reflective practicein a course, tutor-led setting. The coach educators noted that such an approach to learning would provide the grassroots coaches with the necessary tools to practically evaluate their coaching sessions and assess areas of development, whilst releasing some of the strain felt by the coach educator workforce. Collectively, the four studies reveal the importance of examining all age-groups and coaching contexts to gain a holistic picture of coaching.Furthermore, the findings highlight that factors considered to be good practice in terms of effective coaching, such as utilising player-led approaches to coaching (Ford *et al*., 2010) andundertaking regular reflective practice (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004), are minimal within the described environment. However, given the access to young participants, and the effect coaching can have on a young individual, the significance of this investigation brings to life the need for additional support within

grassroots coaching. The following subsections will critically analyse and compare the findings in more depth with what is currently known withinthe extant sport coaching literature.

8.2 Development of learning within Grassroots Soccer

With an ever-growing interest in the research area, scholars continue to examine how coaches learn how to coach (Cushion *et al*., 2010). The present study has looked to develop this literature from the perspective of those coaching within grassroots soccer, specially the foundation phase. When considering learning opportunities, three core sources are noted which include non-formal, formal and informal (Nelson *et al*., 2006). Literature notes that when developing knowledge, learning occurs in both educational settings and non-educationalsettings when gaining further understanding of coaching (Cushion *et al*., 2003). Findings emerging from the present study outlined that numerous learning moments happened across agrassroots soccer coaches' journey, with coaches citing that more memorable learning happened away from a formal, educational setting.

Referring to involvements' coaches experience daily, nonformal learning develops insights and skills (Nelson *et al*., 2006) and is visible through coaching experience (e.g. Cushion *et al*., 2003), coach mentoring (e.g. Nash, 2003) and coaching interactions (e.g. Cushion & Jones, 2001). As developed through the qualitative interviews with grassroots soccer coaches (See Chapter Four), the majority of coaches noted that this type of learning played the largest part in their development. Interestingly, the coaches did not feel that additional sources of information, in terms of nonformal learning, such as books, magazines and manuals (Schemp *et al*., 1999; Irwin *et al*., 2004) or observing content on platforms such as YouTube social media (Wright *et al*., 2007) played any part in their development as coaches.What did emerge from the interview process is that grassroots soccer coaches looked up to professional coaches when they were speaking (Reade *et al*., 2008). Yet, it could be consideredthat transferring coaching philosophy or practice from professional senior soccer to grassrootssoccer may not be age-appropriate in terms of participant development. Literature highlights that mentoring is a valuable component of nonformal learning (Nash, 2003), and such claims where highlighted within the present thesis. Our coaches noted that a key developmental opportunity was to watch more experienced coaches take training sessions and to copy their practice. Within the data collected, coaches noted that being guided by more experienced coaches play a large part in their own coaching, with coaches preferring this type of development opportunity compared to a more formal setting.

The second type of coach learning is that in a formal manner such as coaching courses,

certifications and other continuous professional development opportunities organised by governing bodies (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Irwin *et al*., 2004; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Literature has noted the impersonal nature of coaching courses given the short time periods and limited contact time with coach educators (Knowles *et al*., 2001), which was replicated throughout the data collected within the present study. Findings suggest that the grassroots coaches felt like there was an impersonal approach to the course due to the short timeframes, with minimal opportunities to practically apply the newly gained knowledge provided. Critically, a core finding of the present study was the limited awareness of reflective practice either gained, applied or both. These findings give support to the work undertaken by Nash & Sproule (2009), who noted coaches were graduating from courses without the skills to critically reflect to ensure their development as coaches. Furthermore, grassroots soccer coaches interviewed as part of the research process highlighted that attending formal coach education was with the intention of 'ticking a box', leaving the learning environment in almost a robotic way, fuelled with standardised information provided in the course setting (Cushion *et al*., 2003; Lyle, 2002).

A key finding to emerge from the present thesis is regarding knowledge consumption. Clarity surrounding how coaching knowledge can be transferred from a coach to a player without misunderstanding, in the correct scenario, how to communicate and why to communicate in that way provides a minefield for sport coaches (Nelson *et al*., 2006). When considering the cohort of coaches partaking in the research, the coaches highlighted that all participants learn the same with the communication method not raising any significance in terms of importance. Interestingly, these formal learning contexts facilitate informal learning contexts such as group discussions and networking opportunities, both of which were highlighted as enjoyable elements of coach education by the coaches in the thesis. Literature has noted this approach, a relaxed method to coach education, has led to concerns regarding the quality of delivery (Hammond & Perry, 2005), however no concerns surrounding this werehighlighted in the findings reported. When taking into consideration further criticisms of coach education, the role of coaching practice, notably coaching peers rather than those of an appropriate age group has been outlined (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). In accordance with such findings, coaches noted that this coaching practice did not provide contextual references for when they returned to coaching their junior grassroots participants. This was due to scenarios and issues were unrecognisable given the different contexts (Nelson *et al*. 2006). Furthermore,a finding that came to light which aligns itself to the completed research was the vastly contrasting scenarios between the organisation and calm of a coach education course comparedto that of the chaos surrounding grassroots soccer

in terms the disorganised landscape which lays in wait (Nash & Sproule, 2012). Also, previous works denotes that coach educators have taken an informal approach to course content and delivery (Hammond & Perry, 2005), howeverour coach educators outlined the strict, regimented requirements they follow in terms of alignment to governing body requirements.

Furthermore, Nash and Sproule (2012) outline that a needs-must mindset rather than adevelopmental mindset exists from coaches' perspective when considering formal learning, which was also the case within the grassroots soccer coaches included within the present study. When bringing such a statement to life via the context of the present study, the coaches indicated that formal coach education was a prerequisite to coaching, rather than a desire to improve as coaches. Furthermore, Chesterfield *et al*., (2010) note that many coaches tend to complete courses but make no developmental gains in terms of their coaching ability which was observed through the discussions within the grassroots coaches' interviews (See Chapter Four). The findings presented within the present thesis give the impression that informal and nonformal learning moments are considered more valuable to a coaches' advancement to compared those of a formal nature (Mallet & Dickson, 2009).

Activities that occur outside a formal system of education (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974), such as conferences, workshops or seminars (Nelson *et al*., 2006), come under the term informal learning. Furthermore, the impact of informal learning facilitates greater developmenttime for those involved, compared to formal and nonformal learning (Gilbert *et al*., 2006; Nelson *et al*., 2006). Findings from the present study outlined the role of observations of experienced coaches as a core learning tool alongside conversations with peers lead to powerful developmental moments (Cushion *et al*., 2010). Furthermore, a utilised method of informal learning to enable self-development is that of self-reflection (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Our cohort of coaches present within the thesis displayed limited utilisation of reflective practices,especially with regards to enhancing practice which goes against the work of Cassidy *et al*., 2009) who found that coaches looked to reflection to aid their technical practice and overcomeissues faced within coaching.

Research has indicated that the role of informal learning provides a framework for coaches to develop future actions, develop empathy and understand varying points of view (Jones *et al*., 2014). However, the role of reflection plays little-to-no impact within grassroots soccer coaching given the minimal opportunity to access high quality mentoring or the observation of elite coaches. Although the findings suggest alignment to the notion that the values and beliefs of coaches are moulded by the involvements previously experienced (Loughran, 2008), minimal attempts were demonstrated by the grassroots coaches to deeply

reflect upon these experiences. Instead, the coaches held a preference of engaging in the receiving of 'folk' pedagogy from experienced coaches. These practices may not necessarily be of the required practice as outlined by The FA (Cushion & Partington, 2014). In Cushion's(2014) work the scholar notes that limited personal and critical reflection was evident. Such findings display similarities to the findings displayed within that of the grassroots coaches present in the thesis. Although the role of reflection, in terms of enhancing coaching, has beenhighlighted in terms of shaping future actions (Erickson *et al*., 2007), findings suggest that suchpractices do not play a prominent role in grassroots coaching practice.

When considering the varying backgrounds of the grassroots coaches within this study (e.g. solicitor, accountant, manager), their does not seem to be a certain 'type' of individual who partakes in grassroots coaching. As discussed within the present body of work, some of the coaches have noted that they only coach due to necessity. Therefore, a recommendation for national governing bodies would be to spend more time recruiting those with ambitions of coaching professional. For example, The FA could deliver multiple presentations and recruitment days in local schools, colleges and universities with the aim of enticing young coaches into the grassroots game. This would provide The FA with a number of new candidates who were actively looking to develop as coaches, whilst also preparing them for possible careers within coaching, complementing their academic studies. The FA could assign them a regional coach mentor to work with to ensure they were progressing effectively. National governing bodies could also offer discounted course prices or complementary course places on the agreement of a number of years coaching in return. Furthermore, a young coach could be paired with a more senior figure to guide their early years of coaching.

Focusing on extending the longevity of those already coaching within the grassroots level, examining the backgrounds and interests of the coaches may be useful. For example, a coach who is currently working with under 8s focusing on development considerations may become frustrated due to their background of professional football. This person may be more suited to work with 16-year-olds or older. This may then enable the coach to partake in grassroots coaching for a longer number of years, due to their more relevant interests. Similarly, developing opportunities within grassroots clubs for senior coaches may enable longer terms commitments. For example, clubs could create 'Coach Developer' positions to provide mentoring and guidance for the younger/less-experienced coaches within their clubs. This may provide a new aspect for the volunteer to focus on and lead them to extending their stay with their club.

Finally, this these has also contemplated on opportunities to enhance the offering within grassroots coaching to aid in the effective progression of grassroots coaches along with

the enticing of new coaches. The FA could look to develop a line of workshops focused on the role of reflection within grassroots coaching. This thesis proposes workshops focusing on the detailed outlining of how coaches can undertake critical reflection, to stimulate their own growth as coaches. Such workshops would encourage coaches to place themselves at the heart of their own learning process, leading to a greater interest into how what they value and believe can be practically applied to their coaching. Furthermore, once a coach has completed the workshops they could be listed as a mentor for others to discuss reflective practice considerations. Coaches could form mini communities of practice to positively support each other's development. As this route would be coach lead, higher levels of engagement may be found due to the informal nature of the process.

In summary, informal learning is the preferred choice of learning for those coaching within this environment. That being said, formal and nonformal methods are acknowledged ina less-significant manner. Findings indicate that coaches' values and beliefs are impacted by their experiences, however reflection is not a highly sought activity within the contextdiscussed. Finally, coaches tend to be more open towards the receiving of 'folk' pedagogy fromsenior coaches alongside trial and error compared to critical self-reflection (Irwin *et al*., 2004).

8.2.1 Reflective Practice

Reflection is the developments from varying historical figures; however, John Dewey'sdescription of pragmatism is considered as one of the first scholarly pieces regarding reflection.Since 1910 Dewey, along with others, has discussed that reflection begins with doubt, leadingto considerations regarding resolving the encountered problem. Coaches look to non-formal learning opportunities on a regular basis, and effectively learn by doing, a notion coined by Dewey, better known as *inquiry* (Dewey, 1933). When examining reflective practice within education, teachers were described as being imprisoned in mediocrity should they neglect the implementation of regular and critical reflective practice (Larrivee, 2000). Such findings were visible within our grassroots coaches, with those who engaged in reflective practice better able to align their practice with the values and beliefs they hold. Research undertaken within the health sector outlines that reflection provides a regular opportunity for nurses to analyse their performance, providing openings to act on areas of weakness (McKay, 2008). However, within grassroots soccer coaching, although minimal reflection was undertaken, the coaches that did complete reflective practice did not actively engage in the areas of weakness found. Instead a superficial reflective process was completed leading to minimal coaching developments

compared to the differing sectors.

With the aim of providing similarities and differences to that of work completed within sport, studies have shown that sport coaches who hold more in-depth knowledge are better equipped to overcome problems (Abraham & Collins, 1998). What can be deduced from such findings is that there may be little surprise that those coaching within a grassroots setting struggle to overcome problems and undertake limited reflection. Furthermore, the work of Nash and Sproule (2012) outlines that those who are more experienced look to challenge accepted norms, whereas those of a novice level tend to be accepting of perceived good practice, with limited contestation. Certain similarities between the noted work and that of thepresent study are evident, with grassroots coaches accepting practice with limited challenge asdescribed by the researchers, with most of their learning taking place in such environments.

Although the work of Dewey has informed the present thesis, it was that of Schön's (1983) that was considered in greater depth alongside that of Gilbert and Trudel (1999, 2001, 2004, 2006). Schön (1983) noted that due to limited contact time with tutor's, a large portion of learning is undertaken in a practical setting, which was certainly the case within the group of coaches included in the study. With regards to the importance of reflective practice within the discipline of sport coaching, Gilbert and Trudel (2006) note that not engaging in reflectionleads to minimal improvements, with Schön (1983) emphasising that examining issues that occur both in and out of practice, leads to the effective utilisation of reflection and effective growth. Although highlighted as good practice within professional sport coaching practice (Knowles *et al*., 2001), findings from the present study suggest that very limited reflective practice occurs in the context of grassroots soccer coaching. Various theories have been produced as to why this is, such as lack of time whilst also being considered low on the list of coaches' priorities. However, research indicates that due to the minimal time spent on this topic(effective reflective practice) within the confides of a tutor-led coaching course, graduates leave courses unequipped to individually and effectively undertake such practice (Knowles *et al*., 2005). Similarly, the present finding noted that active coach educators acknowledged reflective practice was currently an area of improvement for coach education courses and mayimpact grassroots coaches, in terms of their self-reflection. Furthermore, what was found whenexamining grassroots coaching was a level of reflection that did not penetrate the superficial. Such findings were discussed in previous work outlining that coach educators assumedcoaches' hold prior knowledge around reflective practice. The present study looked to build onprevious work (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Nelson & Cushion, 2006), by suggesting reflective practice be included within coach education in more depth and in a more structured manner. Such adjustments would aid the successful

implementation and synergy of grassroots coaches'values, beliefs and coaching practice through reflective practice.

Implementing both change and positive developments in coaching are time-consumingprocesses (Cushion *et al*., 2012); with the present study outlining that one of the core barriers for grassroots coaches is the lack of time available for developmental opportunities. To improve as a coach, meaningful and critical judgements must be undertaken rather than the acceptance of artificial reflections, which resonates with the current practices within grassroots coaches (Partington *et al*., 2015). Currently, limited deep-thinking, or inquiry, is applied by grassroots soccer coaching, leading to few improvements as findings from previous work note that thoughts drive action (Partington *et al*., 2015). When considering the methods undertaken by grassroots soccer coach to grow as coaches, observation of more experienced coaches was regularly highlighted through the research project. Although observations promote reflective practice (Partington *et al*., 2015), such approaches also facilitate development of an ideological nature which supports the experiences of those coaching with grassroots soccer. In other words, observations create an assumed "perfect" model of coaching for others to mimic (Abraham & Collins, 1998); which the present study found to be the case in the discussed environment. Observations of coach educators led to a robotic coaching style within grassroots soccer, whilst observations of those not in coach educatory role, i.e. those considered as senior coaches, displayed practice that did not necessarily apply appropriate coaching methods, leading to the transfer of non-best practice practices.

When giving thought to the effective development of best practice, incorporating reflective conversations regarding practice will develop a critical understanding of knowledge, reasoning for actions and self-awareness and overall, opportunities to develop coaching behaviours and practice (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Schön, 1983; Trudel, Gilbert, & Tochon, 2001). However, such practice did not seem to be evident within the context of grassroots coaching, suggesting a chasm between advised practice academically and actual practice being undertaken by novice practitioners. Notions can be deduced from such gaps, in that, although such recommended practices leading to the development of new meaning and knowledge, or theories, improve coaching (Harvey *et al*., 2010; Potrac *et al*., 2002; Carson, 2008; Trudel *et al*., 2001), this is not being practised in grassroots soccer coaching.

What is evident from the coach educators' experiences in terms of reflection, is the incorporation of the varying elementsof reflection (reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action and retrospective reflection-on-action).Reflective practices are implemented by the educator's in their own lives; however, this was not the case within the delivery. This suggests that as

reflection is not explicitly discussed in great depth as part of the course content openings may exist to improve the current coach education offering for those coaching within a grassroots soccer context.

Opportunities to improve as a coach are available through numerous differing formal, non-formal and informal learning, with reflective practice being highlighted as playing a key part in the development of coaches' critical self-awareness (Gilbourne *et al*., 2013). What was consistent throughout the presented thesis is that reflection did not occur in particular depth within the grassroots soccer coaches we explored. This provides a snapshot into the priorities of grassroots coaches and provides insight into one of the opportunities for development withinthe coaching context. Furthermore, when considering whether coaches' philosophical concernsand their coaching practice are in alignment, reflective practice can facilitate change and the bringing of these two elements together into greater harmony (Cushion *et al*., 2012; Partington& Cushion, 2014). That being said, research has pointed out that reflection is a journey, ratherthan a one-stop-shop to fix and develop issues on the odd occasion (Thompson & Pascal, 2012).What was evident within the present studies research findings correlates with this message delivered by Thompson and Pascal (2012), in that, grassroots coaches look to reflection on rareoccasions. The cohort of coaches coaching within this environment utilised reflection superficially to consider the effectiveness of a training session or competitive fixture. Reflection should occur continuously, as the previous researchers suggest, however when implemented, grassroots coaches looked to reflect upon conclusions of activities rather than asa continuous process, as is suggested. In terms of the level of depth undertaken to effectively promote growth and development as a coach, a deep level of critical reflection has been advocated to support change (Cushion *et al*., 2012).

Such criticality was not present in the context of the present study, with considerations being given to superficial practicalities within their practice, rather than deep philosophical considerations. Such deliberations surrounding their values, beliefs and practice through the lens of what a coach is doing and why they are doing it, as suggested (Knowles *et al*., 2001), led to enhanced coach learning (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Nelson & Cushion, 2006). The role of reflection has been outlined as "essential" for the development of a coach (Cushion, 2016),yet within grassroots soccer, certainly in the present study, was not muted as a core part of coaches' regular considerations. Furthermore, the implementation of such practice has been noted as a core trait of an effective coach (Cote & Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert & Cote, 2013), also signifying expertise (Nash & Sproule, 2011). However, what must be remembered is the coaches who partook in the presented works hold voluntary positions and arguably would not consider

themselves as experts, placing higher value on managing relationships, administrativetasks and handling coaching sessions.

When looking at how reflection is portrayed in sport coaching research compared to grassroots soccer coaching, correlations are evident. For example, the role of reflection has been discussed as an element of coaching which is a process for going through the motions, lacking the criticality to facilitate meaningful thought and change (Cushion, 2016). Such discussions would mirror the findings found within grassroots soccer coaching, with coaches undertaking little-to-no rigour in their reflective practice. Similarities occur between the academic research and grassroots coaching, when thought is given to the positive role reflection plays in the enhancement of their practical coaching experience (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). With the soccer coaches in this study, undertaking reflective practice at the completionof practical activities may lead to improved coaching practice, although it would be unlikely that such reflective practices would be of a critical and contemplative nature, as is the case in professional environments.

When examining professional environments, reflection is considered as learningfrom experiences (Nelson & Cushion, 2006), with reflective practice being visible in professions such as nursing (e.g. Taylor, 2006), education (e.g. Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004),social work (e.g. Thompson & Thompson, 2008) and sport coaching (e.g. Partington *et al*., 2015). Disparities can be seen between such professional environments and the context of grassroots soccer coaching, in that the former utilises reflection to gain an understanding of their work. This cannot be said about the environment explored within the present study, nor is the notion that reflection provides new insights through critical evaluation as suggested by Finlay(2008). What can be mirrored from the aforementioned researcher, is the issue surrounding thetime-consuming nature of undertaking reflection, which was a concern for grassroots coachesthroughout the present study. In a similar vein, these apprehensions surrounding reflection canlead to practice being undertaken in a superficial nature, leading to limited self-improvement, as has been found in previous research (Cushion, 2016).

When continuing to think about the professionalism in sport coaching and the integration of reflective practice in professions across varying sectors, evidence of this filtering down to grassroots coaches is evident, yet slow. For example, the coaches of the present study presented themselves in initialled club tracksuits, had coaching equipment along with a sense of expectation from those they were working with (e.g. key stakeholders). Previous work has highlighted that sport coaching is becoming a professionalised environment (Gilbourne *et al*., 2013), and this would be hard to disagree with in terms of the involvements experienced from the present grassroots soccer coaching perspective. The same cannot be said for the role of

reflective practice in the environment. Research has discussed an enthusiasm for undertaking such practices across the coaching community (Cassidy *et al*., 2009; Gilbert & Trudel, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2005; Nelson & Cushion, 2006), however this was not present throughout the grassroots coaching context. Indeed, grassroots soccer coaches seem to take an ad hoc approachto their development, which correlates with previous work (Knowles *et al*., 2001). One of the core findings emerging from the present study was that there was limited contact time, both innature of coach educator support and that of discussing and understanding the implementation of reflection. Due to prolonged time between coach education support and courses, grassroots coaches tended to prioritise the practicalities of coaching, which reflects the findings of previously completed works (Knowles *et al*., 2001). Reflective practice can support the effective integration of philosophical considerations into coaching practice, facilitating coaches' ability to link between what their values and beliefs include, how they coach and whythey coach.

To summarise, opportunities exist for coaches in terms of turning problems into opportunities to improve, known as a "dialectical process" (Dewey, 1910). Findings from the presented work does not support the idea that such activities are heavily undertaken at a grassroots level, with coaches tending to be accepting of both observed coach practices and their own practices. Such findings conflict with the work of Carson (2008), who outlines that having an inquiring and open mind-set enables a coach to be critical and deeply reflective. Theresearcher notes that should coaches be accepting of their practice with limited critique, they will be guided by uncritical, inactivity in terms of developing as coaches. As is the case withingrassroots soccer, due to the nature of the role (voluntary alongside a professional career), many coaches are not supported by an assistant and therefore lack the accountability or challenge associated with effective reflective practice (Cushion *et al*., 2012). There are opportunities to develop critical, reflective practice within grassroots soccer. This would widenself-awareness of coaches, and foster opportunities to enhance their coaching behaviours, withsimilar findings being highlighted in previous work (Partington & Cushion, 2013; Schön, 1983). To facilitate long term changes, reflective practice needs to play a more prominent rolein coach education. This would enable the connecting of coaches' philosophy to their behaviours and practices, effectively.

8.2.2 Philosophical Considerations of Grassroots Soccer Coaches

Philosophy is considered as a world view approach (Hardman & Jones, 2013) and the present study has looked to examine such considerations from within the context of grassroots soccer coaching. The role of philosophy within sport coaching has been highlighted with regards to guiding a coach in terms of their underpinning reasoning for their coaching practice(Drewe, 2000). Furthermore, core philosophical considerations such as previous experiences, core beliefs

and values along with ethical standpoints provide reflective opportunities to affirmand develop their philosophy. This thesis presents findings which do not completely support the work of Drewe (2000), in that grassroots coaches may acknowledge aforementioned considerations (e.g. experiences, beliefs, values, ethics) yet such philosophical factors do not necessarily affect their practice. To further this, findings from the present thesis note that grassroots coaches undertake minimal reflection, bypassing signs for reflection in favour of producing socially acceptable practice, although this will be discussed in detail further into thechapter.

Before providing an in-depth critique of the current extant literature with regards to grassroots soccer coaches', outlining the role of philosophy within coaching practice development in terms of clarifying the standpoint taken by the present thesis is key. As presented in multiple studies (Cushion & Partington, 2014; Hardman & Jones, 2013), there is disjointedness when examining coaching philosophy research, along with very few articles examining a coaches' philosophy in alignment with their practice. Therefore, it was the ambition of the present thesis to develop such limitations within the sport coaching literature in terms of philosophy and coaching practice.

When giving thought to the limitations of the current body of work, studies have been criticised for focusing on coaches' ideologies in terms of their practice, rather than on the underpinnings of their coaching philosophy. To enhance this area of research, the present thesis included elements of ontology, epistemology and axiology to facilitate a holistic exploration of the coaches' experiences, values and beliefs. Furthermore, the present study critically analysed the coaches' undertakings in alignment with their practice with a view of avoiding being anecdotal in nature (Cushion, 2013). To gain further understanding into the coaches' philosophies, coaches provided explanations and rationale's regarding their coaching philosophy to provide insight into what underpins their coaching behaviours and actions. Suchan approach, in conjunction with systematic coaching observations (which will be discussed further into the chapter), provides a complete overview of coaching philosophy as outlined by Gilbert & Trudel, (2004). The present study intended to further the body of sport coaching research by avoiding limitations discussed by previous researchers, such as taking a fictional approach to research (Carless & Douglas, 2011) and examining coaches through a single data extraction point (Schempp *et al*., 2006; Nash *et al*., 2008; Camire *et al*., 2012). Bringing focusback to the philosophical component of the thesis, providing some parameters for the present study enabled a meaningful examination of coaches' philosophies.

Compromising of values, beliefs and opinions, coaches' philosophy guides the coaching practice (Nash *et al*., 2008; Jenkins, 2010), and was the standpoint undertaken when

exploring the world of grassroots soccer coaching. The objective of the presented works was to critically examine coaching philosophy in a depth rarely achieved by focusing on aframework outlined by researchers that facilitates knowledge, practice, direction and reflection(Hardman & Jones, 2013; Cushion & Partington, 2014; Cassidy *et al*., 2009). Within this framework includes axiology (values), morality, ontology (meaning), epistemology (knowledge) and phenomenology (experience) which provides a holistic overview of coaches' philosophy (Hardman & Jones, 2013). By gaining an understanding into the core values and beliefs, in addition to coaches' understandings surrounding age-appropriate priorities and knowledge (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011; Nash *et al*., 2008), insights into what coaches' believeis the correct delivery for those they are working with along with key skills facilitated by a coach can be uncovered (Cassidy *et al*., 2009).

When giving thought to the core skills noted by previous research, discrepancies were displayed between these findings and those within grassroots coaching. A core aim of those coaching within high school coaches was that of life skills development (Gould *et al*., 2007; Camire *et al*., 2012), however this was not the case within those coaching in grassroots soccer. Instead, greater correlation was found between this study and that of a professional soccer environment, where ideologies took precedence (Cushion & Jones, 2014). Nevertheless, one of the more concerning findings emerging from the present study compared to previously completed research is that of developing clear values. Previous research notes that coaches who articulate their values through their coaching philosophy, in combination with deep, reflective practice, are more equipped to support those they are working with (Nash *et al*., 2008). However, given that minimal evidence of values, coaching philosophy or deep, reflective practice was found, this was not the case within the grassroots soccer coaching setting. Instead, greater correlation to the work of Cordes and colleagues (2012) was found, that is, focusing onmatch day plans rather than developmental needs.

Throughout exploring the world of grassroots coaching, what should be acknowledgedis the complex nature of the coaching process (Cassidy *et al*., 2009), as was the case when examining coaching philosophy and additional considerations with the coaches. Cushion and Jones (2014) noted that coaches often improvise, and this was evident within grassroots coaching. Furthermore, coaching has been discussed as a practice that should be the build-up of conscious thought and meticulous reflection (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Contrastingly, the findings in the present study noted that the cohort outlined having minimal thoughts on bringing their coaching philosophy into their practice and, instead, displayed traits such as a lack of preparedness along with minimal planning (Cushion & Jones, 2014). Similarly,

to the findings displayed by Drewe (2000), which remain relevant today, is that undertaking philosophical thinking towards coaching practice would facilitate a greater holistic understanding of the support being provided for those being coached. Before discussing coaching practice, gaining an understanding of a coaching philosophy in relation to the present study must be discussed.

Within the sport coaching literature, a coaching philosophy has been highlighted as a framework for coaches to align their practice too (Collins *et al*., 2009); however, the present study noted that minimal thought was given by the cohort of coaches in terms of critically examining their philosophy and alignment to their coaching practice. Furthermore, such philosophical standpoints played little part in the coaches' behaviour and actions displayed, asis discussed in the extant literature (Carless & Douglas, 2011). That being said, the coaches who participated within the thesis outlined their core values and beliefs in terms of their philosophy (Camire *et al*., 2012). Nevertheless, their inability to implement this practically could be acknowledged as a lack of understanding regarding how to do this. One the core elements of implementing new ideas was through 'folk pedagogy' which was evident through the present study.

When considering 'folk pedagogy', literature outlines the informality of the sharing ofpractices or the handing down of past experiences from experienced or senior coaching figures to novice or inexperienced coaches. That is, an agreed understanding of a 'good' practice or a session that 'works' (Cushion, 2013). Such practice theories, as discussed by Cassidy (2010), was evident when examining the underpinnings of a grassroots soccer coaches' philosophies. In a similar vein to that of Cushion (2013), findings from the presented thesis suggest that 'folk pedagogy' plays a large part in grassroots coaches' development, with inexperienced coaches taking for granted such approaches that are passed down to them from their more senior colleagues. Throughout the interviews with the grassroots soccer coaches as part of the qualitative element of the thesis, what was evident was the knowledge base of the coaches in terms of their understanding.

When examining grassroots coaches' knowledge and understanding, findings suggest that the coaches have ambitions of doing activities and displaying coaching behaviours alignedto best practice (Harvey *et al*., 2013; Partington & Cushion, 2013). However, such practice is not always evidenced within the practical training environment (Harvey *et al,* 2013), nor is a meticulously developed philosophy (McCallister *et al*., 2000), which replicates the findings of which this thesis presents. When considering initial learning moments for those working withina grassroots coaching context, many initial opportunities to gain an insight into coaching was

through non-formal and informal learning moments. Those participating in the study noted that some of their early learning moments were delivered by unqualified, more senior colleagues/mentors along with those in a dissimilar context (e.g. senior soccer). However, the grassroots coaches accepted these practices and methods without question or deep reflection due to the status of those passing on the information (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Initial learning moments are only one of a number of contributing factors when looking to be an effective sport coach (Lyle, 2002).

When examining further factors, the role of coaches' philosophy provides a window into the possible coaching behaviours of the coach (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). Although, such transition between coaching philosophy and coaching behaviours seems minimal in the contextof grassroots soccer. Literature surrounding philosophies held by coaches note that although a coaching philosophy can guide and impact coaching behaviour and practices, coaches tend to hold superficial assumptions about their own philosophy (Cassidy *et al*., 2009). Similarly, when considering grassroots coaches, findings in the present thesis note that although philosophies could be demonstrated, minimal time was taken to enhance this in any way. Furthermore, Cassidy *et al*., (2009) note that practicing coaches undertake minimal, rigorous reflection when considering their coaching philosophy which mirrors the findings in that of a grassrootscoaching context. Additional factors seem to take precedence over philosophical concerns suchas outcomes or appeasing key stakeholders (e.g. parents) (Cordes *et al*., 2012).

When giving thought to the supplementary considerations which look to be held in a higher regard than that of coaching philosophy, ideological thoughts and processes are highlighted due to concerns about the outcomes of competitive fixtures (Cordes *et al*., 2012). In a supportive fashion, those included within the present study acknowledged that their focuscould be on a competitive fixture they were aiming to win which impacted their coaching philosophy. That being said, the present thesis displayed evidence that a handful of the cohort including in the study had no desire to think philosophically regarding their coaching, as was the case in previous research (Cushion & Partington, 2014; Partington & Cushion, 2013). Thegrassroots coaches noted that their time was spent dealing with behaviour management, basic organising and coaching, which seemed to hold greater importance than that of enhancing thephilosophical foundations of their coaching (Nash *et al*., (2008). The present study found that grassroots soccer coaches' practice is not theoretically driven and is instead underpinned by traditional (or folk) pedagogy due to the minimal philosophical considerations and lack of regular reflective practice. Findings discussed support the notion that practices perceived as being of value drive coaching practice rather than deep, philosophical foundations (Cushion *etal*., 2003).

Given the minimal philosophical undertakings within sport coaching, the role of coaches' philosophy should be examined further (Cushion & Partington, 2014). Given the discrepancies between coaches' philosophy and practice, ensuring studies undertaken observations of practice activities facilitate a much more substantial understanding into a sport coaches philosophy, behaviours and practices (Jenkins, 2010). When highlighting the gap in the literature in terms of sport coaching, the present study has looked to enhance the work completed within grassroots soccer. With previous discussions noting that tactical and technical elements of practice should be kept to a minimum, with greater focus on the participant in terms of their development as people (Hardman & Jones, 2013). This was not thecase in the present study, and minimal considerations were given to the enhancement to their participants as people, with greater focus towards being successful (winning matches) being advocated.

Grassroots soccer is a context with minimal examination when considering studies thathave focused on gaining an insight into the philosophical underpinnings of those within coaching. Furthermore, this is also the case when looking to gain an appreciation for the coaching behaviours on display and the practice undertaken. The present study has added to these bodies of work by focusing on an as-of-yet area with minimal examination, that is thosecoaching within grassroots soccer. What the present study has explored is what the coach knows (knowledge), along with gaining an insight into what they do and why they do it (practice activities and behaviours). This was completed with the purpose of gaining greater understanding of grassroots soccer coaches' intentions, as advocated by Lyle (2007). With suchaims in mind, it is important to examine the present thesis' findings in association with the extant literature with regards to grassroots soccer coaches practice activities.

8.2.3 Practice Activities of Grassroots Soccer Coaches

After examining coaching philosophy, the next step in gaining an understanding of the coaching process within the grassroots soccer coaching environment moves towards exploringcoaching practice. The present thesis set out to help develop the knowledge base displayed bysport coaching literature with a view of gaining an insight into grassroots coaches' actions and behaviours, as this is yet to be achieved at the time of writing.

One of the core defining features of a coach is their ability to support the development of the participant's they are working with (Ford *et al*., 2010) and the findings within grassroots soccer support this to some extent. However, it was the case on multiple occasions that outcome-based considerations (e.g. winning fixtures) overtook participant development which will be discussed in greater depth moving through the chapter. Furthermore, adaptability withincoaching has been highlighted as a core trait as the environment coaches find themselves in is ever

changing (Jones, 2009). Such adaptability was not found in great depth within grassroots coaching, with coaches arriving to coaching sessions with the outline of a session which they did not detour from, no matter the performance or progression of those they were working with. The intention of the systematic observations was to gain an understanding of what grassroots soccer coaches do in terms of their coaching practice and behaviours. The purpose of entering the field also was to gain insight regarding how and why they deliver their practice, whilst finally exploring their alignment into their philosophical considerations.

With concern given to coaching behaviours, when considering 'typical' behaviours, varying traits have been identified regarding the role of a coach, the coaching session delivered and the managed environment (Kahan, 1999). Behaviours have included instruction, correction and feedback; however it is important to note that the context the coaches working in may leadto elements of coaching practice varying from the norm, with researchers noting behaviours such as timings and duration of behaviours displayed by individuals (Hall *et al*., 2016; Potrac,*et al*., 2007). When giving further thought to the variables that underpin coaching practice, within grassroots soccer elements such as perceptions from key stakeholders (e.g. parents, coaches, management), relationships developed and language used were regarded highly, as was suggested within the extant literature (Cushion, 2007). What was further displayed when observing those coaching in grassroots soccer was the complex and unpredictable nature of coaching, as described by Jones (2009). Within the sport coaching literature, holding relationships with the described key stakeholders, balancing time-commitments, work obligations and administrative tasks creates a balancing act for those in voluntary coaching positions. Furthermore, such findings were displayed throughout the varying interactions held with grassroots coaches and these experiences support the notion that the professionalisation of coaching continues to grow (Potrac *et al*., 2015); even to those coaching in this setting. Whatwas evident in the present study was the balancing act of all the aforementioned responsibilitiesalong with the deployment of appropriate coaching behaviours.

When looking to examine coaching behaviours in greater depth, historically coaches have predominately utilised methods of a prescriptive nature (Ford *et al*., 2010). Additionally, when examining elite soccer, instructional methods were commonly used, in conjunction with silence and praise (Cushion & Jones, 2001). Academics have not always found coach-led activities, with research focusing on a professional rugby environment highlighting playing form activities as the normality (Hall *et al*., 2016). However, what was highlighted within grassroots coaching was although high levels of playing form were displayed, these activities were not necessarily relevant activities as was the case within wrestling (Deakin *et al*., 1998) and cricket

(Low *et al*., 2013). The need to provide a stimulating environment for participant'sis a core role of a coach (Ford *et al*., 2010). When coaches provide activities that do not hold relevance to the sport or developmental needs of their participants, a lack of stimulation can beseen through limited concentration and behavioural issues, as was the case within the present thesis. A further correlation between the presented works and that of Ford *et al*., (2010) is the apparent desire of coaches to deliver sessions that appease key stakeholders (e.g. coaches, parents). This, however, leads to the delivery of more-traditional, coach-led sessions rather than that of a player-focused nature (Harvey *et al*., 2013).

Traditional or 'folk' pedagogy has been outlined as a common style displayed by those coaching within youth age groups (Cushion, 2013), and the work of this thesis strengthens this claim. The present study also highlights that the grassroots coaches, although facilitating game-like elements, did not effectively challenge their participants through constraints or appropriate coaching behaviours (e.g. questioning). Partington and Cushion, (2013) note thatthe facilitation of learning over the long-term can be achieved through taking a game-centred approach, with findings suggesting this practice is not being delivered within a grassroots soccer context, or at least the sample included within study. Furthermore, research has outlinedthat coaches who approach coaching with the intention of being a facilitator lead to enhanced player development (Law *et al*., 2007). The findings emanating from the context of grassrootssoccer showcases greater commonalities with traditional methods of coaching. Historical challenges were posed in the world of research including the taking a less-prescriptive approachto coaching (Ford *et al*., 2010), and the setting of environments to enable players to learn for themselves (Smith & Cushion, 2006). Neither of these challenges seem to have been met withinthe presented context, leading to the assumption that a chasm exists between those in academicresearch positions and practitioners based in the setting of grassroots soccer. Considering this knowledge gap further, previous work has outlined that providing exposure to players in the form of game-centred activities provides insight and experience in matchday scenarios.Additionally, this better equips players transitioning between training and playing environments (Ford *et al*., 2010), which was not the case in the present study. What was the case in the present study, however was that a direct or coach-centred approach was taken whichhas been highlighted as the norm for those who consider themselves practitioners (Cushion *etal*., 2012).

When considering best practice as outlined by the extant literature, the utilisation of questioning has been highlighted due to the promotion of problem solving the method stimulates (Chambers & Vickers, 2006). What can be seen within the study is that questioningwas used at varying intervals through the observations, however the level of questioning required minimal

thinking and would be considered convergent rather than the thought- provoking divergent style. What was in alignment with best coaching practice and behaviourswas the regular use of praise (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Potrac *et al*., 2002). To the credit of thegrassroots coaches, this was looked to be used on regular occasions, leading to a positive learning environment for their participants.

When looking further into the coaching behaviours of grassroots soccer coaches in greater depth, it could be argued that a greater focus is on outcomes such as winning matches, compared to player development which facilitates longer term benefits including those of a non-sporting nature (life skills) (Ford *et al*., 2010). As previously mentioned, a large portion of research suggests that instruction is a highly used behaviour compared to a behaviour relating to facilitating effective player learning, such as questioning (Cushion & Jones, 2001; Ford *et al*., 2010; Partington & Cushion, 2013). Previous work has suggested that coaches display limited self-awareness when giving thought to the type of behaviours they display whencoaching in terms of both use and impact (Partington *et al*., 2015; Harvey *et al*., 2013). In a similar fashion, the present study outlined that coaches highlighted the desire to facilitate effective, player-focused coaching, along with ideas of how to achieve this. However, when practical observations had been concluded it became apparent that such objectives, in terms ofproviding engaging activities for their participants, were not met.

When discussing the practical implications of coaches' coaching behaviours, a core roleis their ability to facilitate stimulating practices to engage their participants (Cote *et al*., 2007).

Furthermore, to help achieve this, developing a critical mindset in terms of their practices can enable coaches to improve through the undertaking of reflective practice (Partington *et al*., 2015). One of the areas grassroots soccer coaches could look to engage in reflective practice, is considering whether they are delivering activities which mirror that of a competitiveenvironment, which enhances motor skills (Williams & Ward, 2007). Findings from the presentthesis suggests that 'part-practice' activities, as discussed by (Ford *et al*., 2010), whichconstitutes high level of unopposed, structured and prescriptive practice, is the normality for those coaching within this environment. Such practice provides minimal autonomy for participant's along with minimal opportunities to engage in problem solving activities (Williams & Hodges, 2005), which was displayed throughout the observed coaching practice of grassroots soccer coaches. For coaches to provide optimal learning environments for their participant's, scholars have recommended setting constraints within small-sided games (Vickery *et al*., 2013; Low *et al*., 2013). What was displayed within the grassroots setting wasminimal constraints or

challenges to engage and stimulate the participants, which suggests coaches are not effectively following the aforementioned recommendations.

When giving thought to delivering stimulating and effective coaching practice, researchhas outlined that game-based practices, often described as playing form, are required to develop relevant skills required for effective match play development (Ford *et al*., 2010). Furthermore,a host of studies have outlined conditioned games or small-sided games as activities that can be included within a training environment (Owen *et al*., 2004). Although empirical research has been completed in multiple sports (e.g. gymnastics, Law *et al*., 2007, cricket, Low *et al*., 2013; wrestling, Hodges & Stark, 2006), highlighting the effective developmental outcomes ofsuch activities, this was not the case within the present study. What was evident within grassroots soccer was game-based practice, however no constraints, challenges or problems were presented to players along with no conditions. Similarly, findings from Helsen *et al*., (1998) reported that small-sided/condition games provided high levels of engagement for soccer players; however, this was in a professional and international setting. When giving thought to the previous research in a similar context to that of the present thesis, findings suggest that elite soccer players are exposed to the previously mentioned activities on more frequent occasions, compared to that of those participating at a recreational level (Ward *et al*.,2007). Such findings align with the present study, with minimal exposure provided forgrassroots soccer players in the form of conditioned games. With such effective practices facilitating a framework to understand game-based principles and experiences (Ford *et al*., 2010), those playing within a grassroots soccer setting may find themselves at a disadvantagein terms of the speed of their development given their experience of more-traditional coaching.

Research notes that traditional coaching activities take the form of repetitive, drill-like practices which are supported through instructions and regular feedback (Williams & Hodges,2005). High levels of chunked activity allow for the build-up of practice, prior to participantsbeing introduced to game-based activities (Williams & Hodges, 2005). What was evident in the present study was such practice, with coaches tending to overload their participant's rather than allow for autonomous, problem solving to occur. Previous work highlights that taking such an approach may lead to participants being prevented fromengaging in the problem-solving process (Ford *et al*., 2010); effectively slowing thedevelopmental process for said participants. One of the core reasons Ford and colleagues (2010) outline the need to take a player-led approach is due to a prescriptive approach can leadto participants being burdened with information that is not easily retained. With a focus ongrassroots soccer, the findings highlight a tendency for coaches to utilise coach-ledapproaches to practice. This

mirrors that of O'Conner *et al*., (2017), whilst also the workcompleted over 15 years ago by Cushion & Jones, (2001). Such results give the impression that there have been minimal advancements in terms of coach development, from a practitioner's perspective.

What the present study has achieved is the highlighting of the possible scholarship-to-practitioner gap, with coaching practice not moving forward as quickly as the research, specifically within a grassroots soccer coaching context. This may be down to a reluctance to change 'tried and tested' practices (Cushion *et al*., 2012; Potrac *et al*., 2007) or the lack of criticality found within grassroots coaching, which is like that of Cushion *et al*., (2003)'s work. Furthermore, this thesis has looked to develop the work completed within a grassroots soccer coaching environment, specifically those working within the foundation phase which was an area of coaching which required further development (Cope *et al*., 2016; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Kahan, 1999). In addition, what is important to highlight is the fact that coaches within grassroots soccer remain voluntary and are asked to deliver excellent learning experiences to children (Lusted & Gorman, 2010). Furthermore, this is all whilst balancing professional careers, workloads and embracing the scrutiny from key stakeholders (e.g. other coaches, parents) on a weekly basis (Green & Houlihan, 2006). Therefore, the present study has lookedto provide further insight into the experiences, understandings and practices of those within this context with the view of exploring their perspectives as grassroots soccer coaches, leadingto a more "complete" body of work.

8.3 Limitations

The limitations of the thesis must be acknowledged to ensure effective development of future sport coaching research. Although a thorough and rigorous approach to research has been taken, the present thesis is not exempt from limitations. For example, the focus of the study took the perspective of grassroots coaches and although coach educators were interviewed to gain insight from both the coach and the educator. Examining additional key stakeholder's perspectives on grassroots soccer coaching, such as parents or those in additional roles (e.g. chairman, secretary, treasurer), may have shed light on a yet unexplored area of study. Furthermore, as a whole, the study focused on the sport of soccer, however future research may take the route of comparing sports (e.g. soccer v rugby) to gain a more holistic understanding of coaching within a grassroots setting. In a similar vein, the present study focused on the levelof grassroots soccer coaching. Future research may wish to directly compare those in an elite environment against those who are coaching in a grassroots setting (e.g. coaching in a soccer academy at the foundation phase versus coaching in grassroots soccer at the foundation phase).

Finally, the present thesis had a small sample size of 8 coaches, with only one female within in those taking part. To strengthen the findings, a wider sample size could be used in future research along with an even split of genders.

When giving consideration to the qualitative element of the thesis, that is, the study where interviews were completed, limitations need to be deliberated. Firstly, the undertaking of the interviews was extremely time consuming. As over 30 hours of data was collected, the time spent transcribing, coding, analysing and drawing findings could have been spent undertaking additional research activities. Furthermore, given that an individual (i.e. the lead author) is undertaking the research, a distortion may occur. In other words, should theinterviewer hold certain bias towards their expectations from the interview, they may devise questions, unconsciously, to confirm this view. An additional limitation of undertaking interviews within the presented thesis is the role the interviewer plays in the interviewee's answers. That is, simply the presence of an interviewer, in this case the lead author, may haveled the participants to say what they thought was politically correct rather than their actual thoughts. Furthermore, the respondent's may have made up information to sound interesting and more knowledgeable or that they think the interviewer is hoping they might say. As the interview process in the case of the present research was face to face, there was no anonymity.Therefore, the interviewee may have been inhibited in terms of their free responses leading to hesitation, fear of giving incorrect information and the worry that this incorrect information may make them look incompetent.

The next study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative elements; systematic coaching observations. The first limitation to be highlighted is known as the Hawthorne effect (Payne & Payne, 2004). This is where during controlled observations, the participants are aware they are being watched and adjust their behave and act differently. Whenconsidering the present study, it is possible coaches being observed altered their coaching behaviour as they were aware of the camera and researcher at all times (Partington & Cushion,2012). Furthermore, as the sample size was small (n=8), findings lack the ability to be generalised across the wider society of coaching. A further limitation is the coaches' involvement was concluded upon completion of their final coaching session. To further enhance the sport coaching literature, a retrospective interview could have been completed to provide a more "rounded" approach to research and to gain an understanding of the grassrootssoccer coaches' thoughts and feelings post-coaching session. Similarly, the present thesis did not undertake an intervention with the aim of changing the behaviour of the coaches in question. Although the present study set out with the intention of undertaking exploratory research rather than with the intention of changing the behaviour of the coaches participating,an intervention may have provided a holistic approach to research and

enhanced thosepartaking in the study.

The final element of the thesis was further qualitative interviews, by those employed by The Football Association as Coach Educators. The first limitation is the sample size (n=8) and those participating within the study. Given the small sample, the findings are not generalisable across coach education however the findings do provide a glimpse into the views and opinions of coach educators. Furthermore, as only three female coach educator participated within the study, further research may look to examine coaching from this perspective in a more thorough fashion. When examining the sample in greater detail, it is evident that all of the coach educators were employed by The Football Association which mayhave led to a bias when giving answers. Coach educators may have provided answers that suited their employer, rather than their own personal views from the perspective of anemployee, answering with the intention of placing their employer in a favourable way rather than critically analysing The Football Association. Within the study focusing on the coach educator, a limitation may be that the research is one-dimensional, in that, the participants onlyprovided data through interviews. A further limitation of the present study is that the coach educators did not provide a session to observe, and therefore did not provide an example of what grassroots soccer coaches should be working towards in terms of the 'gold-standard'. A final limitation of the study focusing on the views of coach educators was that all of the participants were actively employed by The Football Association. Although this provided a depth in terms of the undertakings of those working in professional coach education, gaining an understanding from the perspective of coach educators employed within other sports (e.g. netball or basketball) or those who are no longer directly employed by the FA may have provided an insight that those who participated within the present thesis weren't comfortable or able to provide.

8.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Whilst the four studies presented as part of this thesis extend what is known about the coachingbehaviours of those within grassroots soccer, inevitably, the research identifies where futurestudies need to be focussed to ensure the constant progression of sport coaching research.Primarily, the present research has focused on the exploration of the philosophies, values andbeliefs of junior grassroots soccer coaches however to extend this work further, future studiesshould look to develop an intervention to change the behaviour of said coaches. Such a studywould provide an opportunity to bring to life the findings of the present thesis in terms of coachdevelopment. As discussed through the thesis, reflective practice played minimal part in theshaping of grassroots coaches' philosophy and was highlighted by the coach educators as

anarea of possible development within the world of coach education. Undertaking an intervention combining these aforementioned suggestions may lead to the development of more effective coach education provision available to the wider grassroots community. Furthermore, facilitating a retrospective interview post-observation would provide a unique opportunity to for coaches to provide insight into their thought process that underpinned their coaching behaviours, whilst also making them more aware of their practice, which may provide a new way of thinking given that a coach could be "living in the moment' when practically delivering.

When considering future research, ensuring further longitudinal studies is vital (Cope et al, 2016). Although, it seems, researchers are presented with a choice of small sample size paired with longer study versus larger sample size with a shorter study, efforts must be made to develop a greater understanding of coaching practice over the long term, as the present thesis displays the only study to take this approach within grassroots soccer. Additionally, arguments have been presented within the extant literature (Kahan, 1999; Cope *et al*., 2016) that there is a limited amount of research surrounding coaching behaviours across multiple sports, countries and populations. To extend this discussion, research focusing solely on the behaviours of female coaches is urgently required and although the present study included a female perspective, this was not the sole focus of the study. Furthermore, a demographic yet tobe examined in great depth is those who play supporting roles in coaching (e.g. assistant coaches, chair-people, physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches, parents) (Hall *et al*., 2016). To move towards a more holistic understanding of sport coaching, painting a picturefrom the viewpoints of not only those delivering coaching, but also those supporting the lead coach allows the sport coaching research to gain an insight into the planning, preparation, delivery and philosophical developments of a coach, and those who contribute.

When looking to further the research within sport coaching, the context of research needs to be considered. The present study undertook a thorough examination of coaches delivering within training sessions, however, to gain a holistic understanding of grassroots soccer coaching behaviours displayed during competitive games must be examined as these behaviours differ from those in training (Cushion, 2010). Given that such research has yet tobe completed within grassroots soccer, a complete understanding of coaching behaviours, bothin-training and in-competition, has yet to be achieved. When considered further, the amount of control available to a coach in a training environment exceeds that of which is found in a game scenario, with a coach reacting to passages of play in an ever-changing environment, leading to the response of circumstances outside of a coaches control (Cope *et al*, 2016). A further context which would see the enhancement of the sport coaching literature would be the

comparing of differing levels and the respective coaches coaching behaviours.

The final recommendation that has been informed by the research undertaken by the present thesis is the development of future research regarding the role of coach education. Thestudy produced findings from current FA employees from their role as coach educators. Though, to gain a further understanding regarding the thoughts, feelings and opinions of those delivering coach education across the UK, embarking on a course of study by interviewing, observing and investigating those no longer in employment would be worthwhile. This study may provide an opportunity to "peak behind the curtain" and give a more rounded overview from those in the role of coach educator. To enhance the sport coaching research further, exploring coach educators from a range sports may allow for a fuller picture to be painted in terms of coach development, whilst also facilitating the development of best practice and the uncovering of common issues within grassroots coaching.

To summarise, the present thesis has provided an initial step in providing an insight into the world of grassroots soccer coaching, however, to further enhance the knowledge heldby the current extant sport coaching literature, further work is required to extend this further. Notably, longitudinal studies in a range of varying settings including gender, country, sport and population would noticeably develop the grassroots sport coaching literature. Furthermore,when giving consideration to the methodologies required, a mixed-method approach providesa holistic picture of coaching. Through an intervention, with the aim of changing behaviour ofthose coaching in grassroots soccer, appropriate provisions could be developed for coach education in terms of developing the offering for grassroots soccer coaches.

8.5 Implications

Based on the collective findings of all four studies, the present thesis offers varying practical implications for the educating of grassroots soccer coaches, sport coaching practitioners, coacheducators, policy makers and key stakeholders (e.g. parents).

Firstly, what was evidenced within the first qualitative element of the thesis, that is the interviews undertaken with grassroots soccer coaches, is that initially a good range of knowledge was discussed. The coaches were able to discuss age-appropriate coaching whilst also being able to note the role of the coach should be a facilitator of creativity and innovation, rather than a prescriber of the player's actions. However, such theoretical discussions were not evidenced within the observed coaching sessions, with the latter (prescription) being observed through each of the sessions. As instructions were one of the most common coaching behaviours demonstrated (see Chapter Six), an implication for coach education is to ensure there is a clear

understanding from all participant's regarding how age-appropriate coaching looks practically. Given the coaches held a good understanding of the concepts in the interviewphase (See Chapter Five), this was not demonstrated practically which suggests a gap in knowledge. Furthermore, coach educators should be aware of the passing down of informationto novice coaches from those who hold authority within a club setting. What became evident throughout the transcripts is that coaches look to informal mentors to gain clarificationregarding their coaching, which was not always in line with the recommendations presented byThe Football Association. Ensuring regular continuous professional development opportunitiesare available for grassroots soccer coaches may reduce the impact 'folk pedagogy' plays in thedevelopment of grassroots soccer coaches.

Secondly, as briefly touched on in the previous paragraph, limited age-appropriate coaching was presented in the observed coaching sessions delivered by the grassroots soccer coaches. Throughout over 40 hours of observed delivery coaches delivered sessions that were very restrictive and did not resemble either a game-related scenario or an environment where junior soccer players could enhance their creativity. What was demonstrated on countless occasions was the laying out of cones, drills and blocked/restrictive practice. Undertaking practice in a random manner provides participants with an opportunity to enhance their learningin accordance with challenges associated with competitive matches. Furthermore, when observed, coaches undertook elements of game-like practice, but this was simply a practice game with no further stimulation or challenge applied (e.g. 2 touch max). With this approach to coaching being evidenced across the full study, the implications for coach education is thatgreater opportunities to practice effective coaching in a supportive, coach educator observed, environment must be facilitated, or an alternative must be developed. It seems coaches are graduating from coaching courses without the ability to effectively transition from course attendee to effective grassroots soccer coach. Providing further opportunities to practice such effective coaching throughout the course may enhance the coaches' ability to develop an understanding surrounding the practical requirements to support their participants effectively. It should be noted that The Football Association does provide additional support through in- situ visits, however due to the limited number of coach educators, the support does not penetrate the high volume of grassroots coaches requiring additional support.

Thirdly, what was evidenced throughout both the interview phase and the systematic coaching observation stage of the present thesis is that grassroots coaches undertake limited reflective practice in all stages; in-action, on-action and retrospective on-action. Indeed, the majority of the coaches included within the study displayed limited awareness of the role of reflection when discussed theoretically. There were also minimal signs that reflective practice

was considered a vital part of the coaching process. Various factors such as time-constraints and the feeling of deep reflection was not a good use of time, leads to the implication for coach education in that educators and courses require greater time teaching reflective practice to those being taught. When considering the practicalities of reflection during their coaching practice, coaches observed sessions that were not delivering outcomes in terms of challenging their player's effectively. At no time throughout this study did a coach change their practice to try to enhance this. Instead, coaches were happy to allow the practice to continue to run until their next blockof planned work arrived. There was minimal experimentation throughout the observed coaching practice, which would have provided stimulus for deep reflective practice to take play. As coaches tended to stick to their "tried and tested" practices, and as the sessions were very repetitive, the opportunities for deep and meaningful reflection due to the lack of constant changing of practices, environments, challenges, restrictions and random events were minimal. What was highlighted by the coach educator's currently delivering coaching courses for The FA, was that such an increase in understanding regarding how to undertake reflective practicewould lead to the decrease of pressure on the current group of coach educators. Should grassroots soccer coaches be armed with the necessary tools and knowledge to undertake deepreflective practice to enhance their own coaching abilities, the need for a mentor or coach educator to support them individually would be diminished. What would be advantageous in this proposed scenario would be an experienced coach or qualified tutor to be the spear head of a community of practice, should there be a need for grassroots soccer coaches to access morepersonalised support, which in turn, may benefit other's also in the community of practice.

To conclude, the present thesis has highlighted the need for coach education to provide a thorough understanding of theoretical concepts to be delivered in a practical setting. This could be completed through the use of greater opportunities to practice age appropriate coaching under the guidance and watchful eyes of the coach educators. Furthermore, the role of reflective practice cannot be underestimated in grassroots soccer coaching given the opportunities to enhance the experiences of grassroots soccer for all involved. As noted previously, enhanced reflective practice would enable grassroots soccer coaches to deliver more appropriate coaching whilst also facilitating their personal growth. This, in turn, would positively impact the need for coach educators to be available for the thousands of grassroots soccer coaches seeking support. Instead, the development of a community of practice where grassroots coaches work with a lead coach or educator to enhance as a small group may be achieved.

8.6 Reflections on Research Quality

When considering all aspects of work, quality is significant. This is very much the case withinacademic research (Seale, 1999). The importance of undertaking quality research cannot be stressed enough, given the potential impact and practical implications which may be developedfrom said work (Seale, 1999). The present mixed-methods approach to the coaching process has taken a rigorous approach to ensuring valid and reliable reporting, as discussed in the previous chapter. What must be highlighted within the present thesis is the differing judgements passed on qualitative and quantitative research. For instance, processes used to ensure quality research in the quantitative field, would be considered inappropriate for those undertaking research of a qualitative nature.

To ensure a rigorous approach to research has been completed throughout the present study, both qualitative and quantitative elements of the work were subjected to processes to determine the level of results collected and analysed. In the case of the quantitative aspect, the systematic review and the systematic observations, this took the form of reliability and validity,as detailed within their respective chapters (See Chapter Three and Chapter Five). Differing ontological and epistemological standpoints were present within the varying data collection methods utilised in the mixed methods work, however (Smith, Sparkes & Caddick, 2014). In this instance, given the differing ontological and epistemological assumptions (Smith *et al*., 2014), ensuring validity and credibility has attracted criticism (Sparkes & Smith, 2009) for being founded upon varying assumptions of the worlds, alongside differing values and beliefsof the individuals passing judgement.

With this in mind, judging the respective data acquired from the varying methodologies, and given the aforementioned varying assumptions, passing judgement in the same manner would not have been appropriate (Sparkes, 2000). When judging qualitative research within sport research, parallel criteria, initially developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), have been applied widely (Smith *et al*., 2014). This criterion provides an opportunity for researchers to compare elements of the work such as credibility, to quantitative criteria suchas notions validity (Smith *et al*., 2014). Nevertheless, due to the incompatible assumptions, such claims have attracted criticism (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Indeed, conflictions exist by thework produced by Lincoln & Guba (1985). For example, the researcher's claimed that given that credibility, derived from member checking, rests within the realms of positivism, due to the participant's perceptions of 'truth'. Yet, the same researchers claim multiple, constructed realities exist. This perspective, therefore, outlines that no absolute 'truth' can be known (Seale,

1999). Criticism of this notion was derived from the perspective that no absolute "truth" can be arrived at, as given researchers undertaking a mixed-method approach must be under the assumption that multiple constructed realities exist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999). Dueto the two positions being incompatible and conflicting, it was my intention to 'let go' of such traditional and conflicting criteria (Sparkes, 2002), rather than beginning with the objectives of validity and reliability or the aforementioned parallel positions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Nevertheless, I strode forward from the position of developing a tactful, purposeful and contextual piece of work, rather than taking an anything goes approach (Sparkes, 1998).

To complete a pragmatic piece of research, I adopted criteria that provided a guide to enhance the current body of work that exists, whilst also facilitating the practical and reflective nature of such a methodological approach. This was completed, instead of utilising rules developed to judge work, such as that of a positivistic nature (Giacobbi *et al*., 2005). To enablea pragmatic approach to the research process, ensuring an honest, open, sincere (Tracy, 2010)and transparent line was taken (Smith *et al*., 2014). Regular reflections surrounding the choosing of methods and their strengths and weaknesses was completed, along with the challenges and vulnerabilities associated. Indeed, the role of critical friends was vital in ensuring effective, pragmatic research was completed, in the form of doctoral supervisors, colleagues and peers. Exposing my research process to such experts enable critique, challenge and suggestions to effectively take place. Indeed, without such input, I would have not reflectedas thoroughly as I did, leading to the consideration of different interpretations and conclusions(Smith *et al*., 2014). Furthermore, in a bid to further strengthen the quality of my work and thetransparent nature of the research process, member checks were completed with the intention of develop credible findings (Patton, 2002). At this stage, I would like to clarify that member checks weren't completed with the aim of findings the absolute 'truth', but rather to develop and enrich the ongoing research analysis (Sparkes, 1992), leading to the co-construction of theresearch findings (Bloor, 1997); enhancing the previously done work within sports coaching interms of the role of member checks (Culver *et al*., 2012).

A further intention, when undertaking pragmatic research, was to ensure a coherent andlogical project was developed. Considerable time and effort were taken to interconnect the research study's aims, objectives, philosophical standpoint, methodology, research design, data collection and analysis (Tracy, 2010). Indeed, a complex, interwoven project has been developed with the intention of grounding pragmatism in all elements and variables of the presented thesis, with the hope of resonating with the reader (Bryant, 2013). What has been attempted and presented is a rich overview of coaching practice, as a whole, with the intentionof reserving the

nuances and complexities which exist within a pragmatic piece of work. Thiswork has then been developed through practical examples and explanations of the coaching process and all its intricacies throughout the rest of the thesis. Furthermore, the findings withinthe present study, in the further pursuit of coherence, were examined in comparison, in terms of similarities and differences, with previous work (Smith *et al*., 2014). The researcher's also outlines their notion of 'width', or scope and evidence when judging the quality of research

produced. Width can refer to a variety of data such as quotes, fieldnotes or raw data to enable readers to develop their own judgements and interpretations.

With such aims in mind, I looked to include as much explicit data as possible into the created thesis from the interviews and observations completed within the field (Hammersley & Atkinson., 2007). I further aimed to portray the feelings, situations and language-style usedto provide the reader with a feeling of heightened sensitivity with regards to those they were reading about (Sparkes, 1998). The objective at this point of the study was to enable identification between the reader, the participant and their experiences. With the hope this would lead to empathy, and an opportunity, for the reader to reflect on what they had previouslyread and felt (Smith *et al*., 2014). If successful, the reader would then resonate with the piece of work, leading to a sense of compatibility in terms of their own previous experience (Smith *et al*., 2014). In short, the concluding and summarising of the thesis is set out with the intentionof engaging the reader through a variety of senses, including how they feel about what they have read, think about what they would have done or said in similar circumstances and also how they react when both consuming the findings and reflecting on the remaining thesis.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

Based on the combined findings of the studies presented, the development of sport coaching research has been enhanced with the provision of this thesis. A main reason behind the initial proposal of the study was the opportunity to develop the literature in a field that the lead researcher was passionate about. Additionally, as the majority of research in soccer has been completed in elite, semi-professional or collegiate (or above) level, a unique opportunity to explore the world of grassroots soccer at the foundation phase was presented. As a somewhat unexploredtopic, the present thesis aimed to make a real impact for those coaching in grassroots soccer and those who are leading the way in coach education. This research set out the intention of developing further understanding of grassroot soccer coaching, their perceptions of a coaching philosophy and how this transfer into their practice. Additional aims included exploring the perceptions of coach educators regarding coach education and the influence coaching philosophy has on grassroots coaches coaching. To bring together a period of six years' worthof research, this final concluding chapter aims to summarise the key, emerging findings alongwith the considerations undertaken throughout the research cycle. Finally, giving an indicationto the research quality delivered throughout the present thesis.

9.1 Key Empirical Findings and Original Contribution to Knowledge

We have positioned the key findings of the thesis in conjunction with the initial research questions with the objective of displaying the originality and significance of the thesis whilst also showing how these questions have been addressed. Four research questions were devisedto give a clear focus to the project, and will be discussed individually over the course of this chapter:

RQ1: What are grassroots coaches understanding of coaching philosophy with regardsto the shaping of their coaching practice?

RQ2: What coaching behaviours are evident within grassroots soccer coaching practice?

RQ3: How do Coach Educator's perceive the role of coaching philosophy within grassroots soccer?

RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between grassroots soccer

coaches and grassroots soccer coach educators, regarding their coach philosophies based on their experiences in life and sport?

The thesis was the first project to address a significant research gap concerning how grassrootssoccer coaches perceived, developed and implemented philosophical considerations throughout their coaching. As a consequence of this exploration, the present thesis is the first of its kind, in terms of considering how grassroots coaches articulate their coaching philosophy, and how it has been influenced. Additionally, the research presented the notion that philosophical considerations are heavily impacted by 'folk' pedagogies, with grassroots soccer coaches seeking support from perceived competent colleagues, rather than the professional, expertise of soccer's governing body. This work supported the coach learning literature which highlights the role informal environments play in the development of a coach (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). Similar to the findings within this thesis, sport coaching research has emphasised the role informal experiences have. Social structures within their own club, along with the coaches' experiences, have a large impact on coaching practice (Light & Evans, 2013; Cushion & Jones, 2014). This was also the first study to employ a pragmatic approach to analysis to address a significant research gap concerning grassroots coaches and their perceptions of coaching philosophy. Consequently, beyond the initial outlining of coaches' thoughts, the research was the first to consider the articulation of coaching philosophy with itsimplementation in, and through, a grassroots soccer coaching context. Similar to that of previous work, the findings did, however, mirror the ideological perceptions of coaching practice (Cushion & Partington 2014). When examining previous work in the field of sport coaching, the presented thesis is the only study focused on grassroots soccer coaching to examine philosophical thinking in the development of values and beliefs, with the intention ofenhancing coaches' practices (Hardman & Jones, 2013). To enable coaches to make effective and appropriate decisions, ontological and epistemological acknowledgment could aid in the informed choices of coaches when considering their behaviours and practice.

The research findings are the first to illustrate the coaching behaviours and practices of grassroots soccer coaches. To further emphasise the significance of this work, the project has also been an industry leader in the attempt to illustrate the challenges faced by grassroots soccer coaches in terms of practically applying their coaching philosophy to practice. Findings present the complex nature of incorporating philosophical considerations into a practical environment, with coaches displaying behaviours that were misaligned to their coaching philosophy. For example, the use of instruction whilst holding an epistemological standpoint of participants

learning by being exposed to autonomy. What could be deduced from the findings was that the coaches' philosophy had nothing to do with effective pedagogical approaches or how learning is constructed for those they are working with (Cassidy *et al*., 2004). Instead, the brandishing of a coaching philosophy was symbolic, tailed towards technical or tactical considerations, rather than the participant's development needs. When considering grassroots soccer, focusing on coaches, the present research is the first to deliver empirical findings supporting the suggestion that incorporating philosophical concepts into practice is currently a somewhat uncritical process, with an implementation of ideological concepts more likely (Lyle & Cushion, 2017).

The presented findings provide significant and original contributions to knowledge as they arethe first, empirical pieces of data associated with the perceptions of coach educators regardingcoach education and the development of grassroots soccer coaches. Findings from the study showcase the perceived importance of a coaching philosophy, along with the outlined importance of teaching grassroots soccer coaches how to develop and implement this. However, the thesis outlines that philosophical discussions were focused on tactical and technical knowledge, with minimal focusing being drawn toward key concepts surrounding pedagogical development or the learning process of the participants being work with. Coach educators would benefit from support in terms of gaining an understanding regarding how themore-thorough teaching of a coaching philosophy would enable grassroots coaches to implement certain practical behaviours and activities that would stimulate key critical reflectivemoments such as 'how', 'when' and 'why' such practices were completed. Furthermore, to help focus a deep, reflective process, and enable the easing on coach educators upon graduationof a coaching course, greater philosophical understanding would enable coaches to develop their own guide to align their key interactions and actions (Lyle & Cushion, 2017). This framework would also enable coaches to develop their self-awareness, in terms of their environment they are coaching in, their practice and those they are working with. This would also aid in the separating of key technical and tactical information and the coaching philosophy they are looking to implement (i.e. axiology, ontology, epistemology and ethics). Coach educator's look to provide grassroots coaches with idea, hints and tips, almost a toolbox of effective coaching (Denison, 2007), which tend to be accepted uncritically by the course attendees. An alternative for those working within coach education would be the facilitating of grassroots coaches thinking about the coaching process they are working through, withconsiderations given to the environment, participant and behaviours being displayed (Cassidy*et al*., 2015). These suggestions would lead to coaches reflecting upon the 'quality' of their work, leading to the justification for their practice and how it mirrors their coaching philosophy(Jones, 2017). This would also provide coaches with an

opportunity to outline their own, bespoke opportunities to develop whilst also lead to a change to the learning culture evidencedby those coaching.

Collectively, this thesis revealed the potentially important role reflective practice plays in the enhancement of grassroots soccer coaches and has contributed to potential publications and conference presentations (See Appendix E). Looking to break the cycle of uncritical practice, developing a greater understanding of values and beliefs could lead to the development of a more critical and reflexive coach (Smith & Cushion, 2006). It appears that there is an opportunity to uniquely develop coach education to provide a more holistic learning experiencefor grassroots coaches to enable them to leave courses armed with the necessary tools to ensuretheir development does not stagnate upon graduation. Furthermore, that coaches are unable to directly apply the techniques and tips provide during course contact time. Within these aforementioned coach education courses, there is a central figure who can provide answers, guidance and support and significantly influence those being taught. The coach educator's prominent role cannot extend into the grassroots club environment due to time-restrictions and resources. Therefore, actively ensuring grassroots coaches have the skill set to self-facilitate the reflective process will ease the burden on the coach education system.

In more concrete terms, the evidence presented in this thesis highlighted that grassroots coaches are well prepared in terms of existing coaching knowledge and can openly discuss effective coaching practice. Furthermore, through the present thesis, findings emerged which highlight that grassroots coaches are influenced through their past experiences as participants and from experiences being mentored by more senior coaches within their grassroots club environment. Through these encounters, grassroots soccer coaches' practice is developed, however not necessarily in alignment with recommendations as this is through a 'folk' pedagogical approach. In addition, minimal planning and preparation is undertaken, with coaches being constricted by training slots and work commitments. The grassroots soccer coaches noted that minimal reflection, in terms of positive or negative experiences, is undertaken with greater focus given to the outcome of competitive fixtures. Upon observing the grassroots soccer coaches' practice, findings displayed that coaching practice resembled anarchaic style, with coaches taking a prescriptive and controlled coaching approach. Within these observations, instruction was a commonly used coaching behaviour and this was found across all participants. Moreover, what emerged through the systematic coaching observationswas the facilitation of game-like scenarios however the participants sessions lacked the challenges, game-realism and competitive restrictions promoted through coach education courses. What also came to light through the observations was that the process of reflection was minimal-to-none-

existent during coaching sessions, with errors overlooked (e.g. practice area being too small/big) or opportunities to further extend the coaching drill missed (e.g. limiting participant touches or setting individual/group challenges).

The final core finding of the thesis is the important role the coach educator plays in thedevelopment of grassroots coaching, upon completion of the course. As previously noted, the burden on coach educators is large given the large number of grassroots soccer coaches requiring support. The coach educator's enjoyed similar experiences in their early coaching career, such as using their past experiences to aid their coaching along with looking up to seniorcoaches for support. A difference observed is the innate desire to professionalise themselves within coaching through employment and higher-level coaching qualifications. A core part ofthe discussions held with the coach educators was regarding opportunities to improve the coacheducation provision for grassroots soccer coaches. The participants of the final study outlinedthat a more focused approach to teaching reflective practice would be useful. The coach educators outlined that spending time ensuring reflection was taught thoroughly within the structured course environment would enable coaches to feel confident undertaking this processaway from the course. Importantly, applying this practically would alleviate the duress the coach education system in soccer is under. This would be due to the grassroots soccer coachesbeing able to rely on their highly developed reflective skills to ensure they were developing as coaches. Additionally, such skills would also enable coaches to critically analyses their own coaching in ensuring the alignment of their practice with the coach education recommendations.

The take home message from the four studies developed through this thesis is that the topic of coaching within grassroots soccer is widely under-researched. The present thesis has gone some may to begin to explore a vast topic and shed some light on an important domain of sport coaching. Importantly, the thesis has explored the philosophical considerations, valuesand beliefs of grassroots soccer coaches and has gone some way to understanding the contributing factors that underpin their own coaching practice. Furthermore, the study has brought to life the coaching behaviours of those coaching within grassroots soccer, outlining the regularly used method of instructions within their practice. What has also been evidenced is that coaches have utilised a blocked approach to practice, with random practices being rarelydeployed. In addition, the use of questioning, challenges or constraints were not incorporated into coaching sessions as recommended by The Football Association. Finally, the study has identified that the role of reflection plays minimal part in a grassroots soccer coaches daily coaching practice. It is highly recommended by current coach educators with regards to providing a more-rounded, bespoke and self-facilitated method of development for grassroots soccer coaches. Supporting the

aforementioned group with developing reflective practice skills would not only enhance confidence held by the coaches but additionally alleviate the strain currently placed on a an already strained coach education workforce. Grassroots coaches could further this reflective process through the development of a community of practice. This could consist of a coach educator or higher-level coach, along with a group of 10-15 local grassroots soccer coaches who utilise reflective practice to discuss opportunities for their development.

Sport coaching practice in grassroots soccer research is still in its relative infancy and few studies have examined the role, philosophies and practices of those coaching regularly within grassroots soccer. However, the findings of the four studies within this thesis have contributed to the existing knowledge base and have created a firm foundation on which future research, policy and practice may build.

Appendices

Appendix A –
Study One

A1: Overview of Systematic Review Protocol

A2: Overview of Study Characteristics

A3: Overview of Included Papers

Appendix B – Study Two

B1: Initial Email Correspondence – Grassroots Coaches

B2: Participant Information Sheet

B3: Generic Informed Consent Form

B4: Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent FormB5: Participant De-Brief

B6: Interview Schedule – Grassroots Coach Interviews

Appendix C – Study Three

C1: Continuation Email Correspondence – Grassroots CoachesC2: Participant Information Sheet

C3: Generic Informed Consent Form

C4: Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent FormC5: Assent Form for Children

C6: Participant De-Brief

C7: Overview of Coach Raw Data (Totals)

Appendix D – Study Four

Appendix A – Study One

A1: Overview of Systematic Review Protocol

ITEM	DETAILS
Review Questions:	What is the current range of literature on coaching practice able to tell usabout methods used within grassroots sport?
Domain to be Searched:	Coaching Practice AND Sport AND Youth OR Grassroots
Range to be searched:	It is widely discussed and accepted that Kahan (1999) drew together the key elements of initial sport coaching literature, and therefore to further this work, the present study will look to examine grassroots coaching specifically. Therefore, it was decided only to include studies that fell within the date range of 1985 to the present year 2016, given the emergence of more specific coaching research at this point in time. From: 1985 To: 2016
Inclusion Criteria:	Studies are considered for inclusion if they provide quantitative or qualitative data (Goodger, Gorely, Lavallee & Harwood 2007) on coaching practice in sport and have been published as full papers, or research notes in peer-reviewed journals between 1985 to 2016. Allpapers are included if they are based on varied and independent populations, and samples are not distinguished by: size, age, gender, coaches coaching level, the physical education context, or by the type of sport itself. Articles must have been published in the English language and contain data specifically focused on coaching practice in sport.
Exclusion Criteria:	Studies are excluded if they have been published as abstracts or conference proceedings which is in accordance with previous recommendations on conducting systematic reviews (Nicholls & Polman,2007; Knipschild, 1995). Studies that were conducted prior to 1985 havealso been excluded. Additionally, papers have also been excluded if the identified recipient of the coaching practice identified as within the seniorlevel (18+). Such roles are focused more directly towards performance outcomes/impacts of sport which sits outside of the focus of this study which is centred on coaching practice within sport.

Electronic Search Locations:	Studies were obtained through electronic literature searches on: SPORTdiscus, PubMedScopus Google Scholar, Which were all searched in 2016.

	Key words used in the electronic search were: Coaching Practice ANDSport AND Youth OR Grassroots The table of contents for the following journals were also included in theelectronic search for this systematic review: International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching,Sport Coaching Review, Journal of Sport Behaviour,Journal of Sports Sciences, Quest, Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, Journal of Teaching Physical Education, Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, The Sport Psychologist, Sport, Education and Society, Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics Annual,Reflective Practice, Soccer and Society, International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching,Sport Coaching Review, Coaching and Sport Science Journal,Science and Football, Journal of Sport Sciences, European Journal of Sport Science, Journal of Sports Psychology in Action,International Sport Coaching Journal, Journal of Coaching Science, Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports. Electronic copies of all studies included in the electronic search locationsfor the systematic literature search were extracted and stored as hard copies.
Manual Search Locations:	Manual searches of reference lists from research papers included in thesystematic literature review were also included in the search process. Hard copies of all studies included in the manual search locations for thesystematic literature search were extracted and stored as hard copies.
Review Process (post search):	Sifting will be carried out in three stages as recommended by previous work (Rumbold, Fletcher & Daniels, 2012; Nicholls & Polman, 2007; Jones, 2004; Meade & Richardson, 1997). Papers were first reviewed bytitle, then by abstract and, finally, by full text, excluding those at each step that did not satisfy the inclusion criteria (Jones, 2004) see

	Figure 4.1 for illustrated overview of the sifting process undertaken within this systematic review (adapted from Nicholls et al. 2007).
Documentat -ion of the Removal Process:	A three-stage removal process was undertaken as part of the review and sifting process which was adapted from the approach undertaken by Nicholls *et al.,* (2007). 485 references were removed after reading their title during the initial phase of sifting. The abstracts of articles that couldnot be excluded at the sifting stage were then read and 317 references were excluded from the study at the secondary stage of sifting. A total of164 full papers were screened, 141 of which were excluded at this final tertiary stage of the sifting and removal process. Therefore, 23 full papers were included in the final systematic review.

Critically Appraising Studies:	Once the studies selected for inclusion were finalised the appraisal of thefull papers adopted the same systematic review procedure as previous studies (Sallis *et al*., 2000, Goodger *et al*., 2007; Park *et al.*, 2013). This evaluative protocol involved in the construction of detailed descriptive data tables depicting: the design of the research and sample characteristicsof the study populations in one table and then, relationship/s to characteristics of coaching practice in sport in the second table. This descriptive, semi-quantitative review protocol has previously been adopted and developed by other researchers conducting systematic reviews that do not include in the review meta-analysis studies due to thelack of statistics in the papers and wide variety of methods adopted (Rumbold *at al*. 2012; Nicholls & Polman, 2007). This then enabled the systematic review process to focus on four clear narrative features, namely: 1) Deliver a detailed examination of the range of methods utilised todate which will support future research development; 2) Provide detailed examination of the sample characteristics adopted to date which will draw out any gaps in sampling approaches to support future research development; 3) Evaluate how coaching practice has been conceptualised and discussed across the included papers under review and identify global or differentiated approaches to support future research development; 4) Analyse the specific, differentiated coaching practice methods andtheoretical factors that illustrate relationships with sport to provideon overview of the applied practical implications whilst alsosupporting future research development (Park *et al*., 2013). All included papers were initially coded with a bibliography number andfrom this additional coding was used to determine:

	• Research design: quantitative/qualitative approaches and data collection tool; • Sample characteristics of study populations: size, gender, age,type of sport, participation domain, geographical location; • Relationship to characteristics of coaching practice in sport. This provided a sound pre-validated approach to the full appraisal of thefinal full papers selected in this systematic literature review.
Synthesising the findings from individual studies:	The constructed data tables compiled through the analysis of the full papers selected for inclusion in this systematic literature review were further critically discussed by information set as depicted in the appraisalprotocol, these were: Author/s Design SampleSize LocationGender Age Group Sport Type Competitive LevelMeasure Key Findings This process has been adapted from the approach set out in a study by Park *et al.,* (2013) and establishes a coherent basis for this collated evidence base to be discussed fully through the concluding sections of thisresearch study. The reporting of the results will include details such as: • The number of quantitative and qualitative papers included; • The number of participants in the quantitative/qualitative studies; • The mean age of the participants in the quantitative/qualitative studies; • The mean percentage of males in the quantitative/qualitative; • The mean percentage of females in the quantitative/qualitativestudies; • Of the studies included in the review the number that had a singlegender sample population; • The total number of participants across the studies, and the rangeof sample sizes; • Across the samples, the different sports identified of which wereteam sports and individual sports; • The varying countries the studies were conducted in.

A2: Overview of Study Characteristics

Author/s	Design	Sample Size	Location	Gender	Age Group	SportType	Competitive Level	Measure	Key Findings
Choi, Choi& Kim, (2005)	Quantitative	93 Coaches	SouthKorea	N/A	N/A	N/A	Youth	Delphi Technique, Questionnaire & 7-point Likert Scale	The results of this study lead to the conclusion that these items (enthusiasm, ability to motivate athletes, sports management, BA degree in sport, provide instruction without discrimination, establish open and harmonious relationships with youth's parents and risk management) should be a major concern for youth sport coaches who wish to be successful on the jobs.
Flett, Gould, Griffes & Lauer, (2013)	Qualitative	12 Coaches	USA	Mixed	N/A	Soccer, Cheers, Coed Soccer, Mixed- Basketball	Youth	Interviews & Ethnographic Observations	The results of this study provide possible insights as to why more and less effective coaching differs. The study provides unique insights for researchers and coaching educators interested in particularly underserved settings and in developing less-effective coaches.
Claringbould, Knoppers& Jacobs, (2015)	Qualitative	29 Participants	The Netherlands	Mixed	N/A	Swimming, Tennis,Hockey, Soccer,	Youth	Interviews	Results show that the dispositionsthe youth participants developed during their sport participation shifted as they gradually became involved in a disciplinary processdirected towards improvement,

						Water Polo, Volleyball			success and winning. As they participated in organised practices over time, they learned that in orderto have fun they had to conform to informal rules about behaviour during the practices.
Cronin, & Armour, (2015)	Qualitative	1 Coach	UK	Male	7-18 years	N/A	Community	Interviews	The narrative describes the 'lifeworld' of the coach and seeks toidentify the 'essential features' of community coaching. For this case study, the essence of community coaching lay in two complementary activities; planning and then delivering fun based activities that achieved social, health and sporting outcomes.
Duarte, Garganta & Fonseca, (2014)	Quantitative	22 Coaches and288 Players	Portugal	Male	Coaches: 18-39 years;14-19 years	Soccer	District	Coaching Efficacy Scale	Results showed that motivation and character are the most valued factors by players and coaches, there are significant differences in the importance attributed by the coachesto the motivation and strategy factors and the behaviours they adopt in practice, there are significant differences between efficacy factors ranking made by different age groups and there was a positive and consistent relationship between the players' evaluation of the efficacy factors' importance and

									their perceptions about the behaviours adopted by their best coaches.
Ford, Yates & Williams, (2010)	Quantitative	25 Coaches	UK	N/A	8-16 year	Soccer	Elite, Sub- Elite &Non-Elite	Systematic Observations (Arizona State University)	Findings show coaches provided high levels of instruction, feedback, and management, irrespective of the activity in which players engaged. Few differences in practice activitiesand instructional behaviours were reported across skill and age groups,implying the absence of any notable age- or skill- related progression.
Lewis, Groom & Roberts,(2014)	Mixed method	1 Coach	UK	Female	Coach: 38 years	Soccer	Commu nity	Baseline assessment, intervention and follow up phased (Coaching Behaviour Assessment System)	Results revealed no significant change in coach behaviours from the baseline assessment to the follow up assessment. Results of the descriptive-analytic data generated from the cognitive investigations highlighted generally positive although not statistically significant changes, particularly those concerning the athletes' attitudes towards their coach, teammates and soccer, following the intervention process.
Nash & Sproule, (2011)	Qualitative	2 Coaches : 1 Expert,	UK	Female	N/A	Swimm ing	Represe ntative: Expert, Commu	Interviews	The study evidences that the expert coach adapts her practice to the emerging situation by synchronising a number of pertinent variables,while the novice coach mimics

		1 Novice					nity, Novice		perceived good practice during her sessions. The developmental process from novice to expert status within coaching adheres to certain principles formulated within other domains, but it is perceived in this case to be due to the interest and application of the coach rather than the formal coach education input.
Trottier & Robitaille, (2014)	Qualitative	24 Coaches (12 high school basketball & 12 community swimming coaches)	North America	Mixed	Coaches Age: 23-29 years	Basketball, Swimming	High School and Community	Semi-Structured	The overall results indicate that all coaches fostered the development of life skills through various teaching and transfer strategies, and that coaches had two main motivations: athletes' needs and their own values.
Mesquita, Sobrinho, Rosado, Pereira & Milistetd (2008)	Quantitative	11 Coaches	Portugal	Mixed	14-18 years	Volleyball	Amateur	Systematic Observations (Arizona State University Instrument)	The results show a predominance of instructional behaviours like pre-instruction, concurrent instruction and post instruction. However, it seems consistent to assume from thecoaches observed, that they show a lower use of instructional and praise behaviours compared with that of

									top-level professional coaches as verified in earlier studies.
Low, Williams, McRobert & Ford, (2013)	Quantitative	N/A	England	Male	Recreational: 9-12 years, Elite:13-17 years	Cricket	Recreational & Elite	Filmed Coach Delivery, Performance Analysis Software (Studiocode, Sportscode, NSW Australia)	Findings show that all players combined spent 69% of session time in Training Form activity and 19% in Playing Form, with the remaining percentage of time spent in transition between activities. Recreational children around half of their time in Playing Form activity, whereas both elite and adolescent groups spent little or no time in this activity. Findings from this research highlight a gap between research and practice that may not be optimal for skill acquisition.
Claxton, (1988)	Quantitative	9 Coaches	USA	N/A	N/A	Tennis	High School	Systematic Observations (Arizona State University Instrument)	Analysis of the data showed that the more successful coaches asked a significantly greater number of questions of their players than didthe less successful coaches. The tennis coaches demonstrated more instructional behaviours than any other behaviour but spent more intervals in the Other category than in any other behavioural category.
Jones, Housner & Kornspan, (1997)	Mixed-Method	10 Coaches	USA	N/A	N/A	Basketball	High & Middle School	Filmed Coach Delivery, 6-point Likert	Analysis of coaches' behaviour and interactive decision making indicated that experienced coaches exhibited significantly higher more

								scale, Stimulated Recall through structured interview	technical instruction, whereas inexperienced coaches exhibited significantly higher frequencies of silent observation. With regard to interactive decision making, results indicated that both experienced and inexperienced coaches implemented practice in ways consistent with their plans. Experienced coaches, however, were significantly more reluctant to change their plans when problems were perceived.
Conroy & Coatsworth, (2007)	Non-Experimental	165 participants (66 boys, 99 girls)	USA	Mixed	7-18 years (M=11.2)	Swimming	Recreational	The Autonomy-Supportive Coaching Questionnaire (ASCQ)	The study found that the ASCQ appears to provide a valid assessment of young athlete's perceptions of autonomy-supportive coaching. Autonomy-supportive coaching should be evaluated as a potential source of motivational consequences of coaching and as a potential moderator of coaching effects on youth internalization.
Harvey, Cushion, Cope & Muir, (2013)	Mixed-Method	3 coaches	UK	Male	N/A	Field Hockey, Volleyball & Basketball	Collegiate (University)	Systematic Observation, Coach Analysis Intervention System (CAIS),	The study found that although multivariate analysis of variance tests revealed significant differencesfor the practice state of two of the three coaches, follow-up analyses revealed that the main differences incoaching behaviour were between 'other' states when compared to

								Interpretive Interviews	'training' and 'playing' states. The results demonstrated limited changes to coaching behaviour as afunction of 'practice state' for the three coaches, intimating that the drivers of the coaches' design and implementation of practice sessionsand the delivery of instruction weretheir existing 'folk pedagogies' rather than scientifically based evidence.
Smith, Ward, Rodrigues-Neto & Zhang, (2009)	Quantitative	3 players	USA	Male	9 years	Soccer	Recreational	Academic Learning Time – Physical Education Short Version (ALT-PE)	Results showed while the players were engaged 75.5% of practice time, there were less than 20 trials per 10-min for players to improve. These data have important implications for both coaching and physical education instruction. The most of which is that coaches and teachers need to create practice environments that provide opportunities for students to engage in high numbers of successful trials.
Erickson & Cote (2015)	Review	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Youth	The Assessment of Coaching Time (ACT), Systematic Observation	The results of several strategies employed to establish the preliminary reliability and validity of the system are also presented. While acknowledged as a significant component of coaches' interactions, intervention tine has yet to be

									comprehensively examined from a behavioural observation perspective, perhaps due to a lack of validated observation instruments designed for this context.
Larsen, Van Hoye, Tjomsland, Holsen, Wold, Heuze, Samdal & Sarrazin, (2015)	Qualitative	18 coaches	France & Norway	Mixed	10-14 years	Soccer	Grassroots	Semi-structured Interview	All coaches expressed the intentionto embrace the philosophy of the program and to apply several of the strategies they had learnt during the workshop. The coaches perceived that the program supported their efforts to develop and implement strategies to stimulate intrinsic motivation, enjoyment and long- term participation among the players.
Horn, (1985)	Quantitative	72 athletes, 5 coaches	USA	Female (athletes)	Athletes: 12-15 years (M=13.9)	Softball	High School	Coaching Behaviour Assessment System (CBAS)	Multivariate regression analyses revealed that a significant portion ofthe variance in the players' psychosocial growth was a functionof both the players' demonstrated sport competence and the behaviours of their coach in response to their skill performance. Although skill competence was the largest contributor, certain coaching behaviours were also influential in explaining changes in players' perceptions of competence.

De Marco, Mancini & West, (1997)	Mixed-Method	1 coach, 22 players	USA	Male (Coach)	35 years	Baseball	Collegiate	Coach Journal, TheSelf-Assessment Feedback Instrument (SAFI), Coach's Performance Questionnaire	Analysis of the data indicated that the coach successfully changed all targeted behaviours, improved the quality of his instruction, and experienced heightened self-awareness. Analysis of the coach's journal indicated that the self-assessment process was at once a humbling, instructive and enlightening experience for the veteran coach. The process of self- assessment was determined to be aneffective method of monitoring, modifying, and improving one's own coaching behaviours.
Thomas, Morgan & Mesquita,(2013)	Qualitative	15-22 Players	UK	Male	9-11 years	Rugby Union	Primary School	Group and Individual semi-structured interviews, Reflective Journal Logs, Audio Recordings	The results highlighted the main challenges for the coach revolved around being less plan dependant, developing a facilitator role to support players' learning, and allowing sufficient time for the players to apply the knowledge inthe game.
Horsley, Cockburn & James, (2015)	Qualitative	9 Coaches	UK	N/A	11-13 years	Soccer	Grassroots	Semi-structured Interviews	The key findings illustrated that participation coaches adopted aspects of holistic philosophies but,with one exception, were unable to provide evidence of using coherent philosophical approach. Many of the

									coaches showed a lack of understanding of what constituted a philosophy, and how to both implement one and deal with the barriers to its implementation.
Thomas & Wilson, (2014)	Qualitative	9 Coaches	UK	Male	7-11 years	Rugby Union	Participation	Semi-Structured Interviews, Development Model of Sports Participation (DMSP)	The findings of the study were generally supportive of the principles of the developmental model of sports participation (DMSP). In particular, elite coachesidentified that an emphasis on less- structured games (deliberate play) and early diversification (sampling) were beneficial for player development in the mini rugby years (under 12). However, contrary to a strict interpretation of the DMSP, the coaches also identified that appropriate adult involvement and organised competition could be beneficial to development in these sampling years.

A3: Overview of Included Papers

Choi, D., Cho, M. & Kim, Y. (2005). Youth Sport Coaches' Qualities for Successful Coaching. *World Leisure Journal*, **47**, 14-22.

Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A. Jacobs, F. (2015). Young athletes and their coaches: disciplinary process and habitus development. *Leisure Studies*, **34**, 319-334.

Claxton, D. B. (1988). A systematic observation of more and less successful high school tennis coaches. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, **7**, 302-310.

Conroy, D. E. & Coatsworth, D. J. (2007). Assessing autonomy-supportive coaching strategies in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, **8**, 671-684.

Cronin, C. & Armour, K. (2015). Lived experience and community sport coaching: A phenomenological investigation. *Sport, Education and Society*, **20**, 959-975.

De Marco, G. M. P., Mancini, V. H., & West, D. A. (1997). Reflections on change: A qualitative and quantitative analysis of a baseball coach's behaviour. *Journal of SportBehaviour*, **20**, 135– 163.

Duarte, D., Garganta, J. & Fonseca, A. (2014). The efficacy of youth football coach – perception of players and coaches of different age groups of Portuguese football. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, **14**, 66-73.

Erickson, K. & Cote, J. (2015). The intervention tone of coaches' behaviour: Development of the assessment of coaching tone (ACT) observational coding system. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, **10**, 669-716.

Flett, R. M., Gould, D., Griffes, K. R. & Lauer, L. (2013). Tough love for underserved youth: A comparison of more and less effective coaching. *Sport Psychologist*, **27**, 325-337.

Ford, P. R., Yates, I., & Williams, A. M. (2010). An analysis of practice activities and instructional behaviours used by youth soccer coaches during practice: Exploring the link between science and application. *Journal of Sport Sciences*, **28**, 483– 495.

Harvey, S. S., Cushion, C. J., Cope, E. & Muir, B. B. (2013). A season long investigation into coaching behaviours as a function of practice state: the case of three collegiate coaches. *Sports Coaching Review* [Online].

Horn, T. (1985). Coaches' feedback and changes in children's perceptions of their physical competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, **77**, 174-186.

Horsley, D., Cockburn, E., & James, I. A. (2015). An exploration of participation football coaches' philosophies from development to expression. *Sport & Exercise Psychology*, **11**, 22-36.

Jones, D. F., Housner, L. D. & Kornspan, A. S. (1997). Interactive decision making and behavior of experienced and inexperienced basketball coaches during practice. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, **16**, 454.

Larsen, T., Van Hoye, A., Tjomsland, H., Holsen, I., Wold, B., Heuze, J., Samdal, O. & Sarrazin, P. (2015). Creating a supportive environment among youth football players. *Health Education*, **115**, 570 – 586.

Lewis, C., Groom, R. & Roberts, S. (2014). Exploring the value of a coach intervention process within women's youth soccer: A case study. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, **12**, 245-257.

Low, J., Williams, A. M., McRobert, A. P. & Ford, P. R. (2013). The microstructure of practice activities engaged in by elite and recreational youth cricket players. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, **31**, 1242-1250.

Mesquita, I. M. R., Sobrinho, A., Rosado, A. F. B., Pereira, F. & Milistetd, M. (2008). A systematic observation of youth amateur volleyball coaches' behaviours. *International Journal of Applied Sports Sciences*, **20**, 37-58.

Nash, C. & Sproule, J. (2011). Insights into experiences: reflections of an expert and novice coach. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, **6**, 149-162.

Smith, R. C., Ward, P., Rodrigues-Neto, M. & Zhang, P. (2009). Practice Behaviors of Youth Soccer Players. *Physical Educator*, **66**, 2-11.

Thomas, G. L., Morgan, K. & Mesquita, I. (2013). Examining the implementation of a Teaching Games for Understanding approach in junior rugby using a reflective practice design. *Sports Coaching Review*, **2**, 49-60.

Thomas, G. L. & Wilson, M. R. (2014). Introducing children to rugby: elite coaches' perspectives on positive player development. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, **6**, 348-365.

Trottier, C. & Robitaille, S. (2014). Fostering life skills development in high school and community sport: A comparative analysis of the coach's role. *The Sport Psychologist*, **28**, 10-21.

Appendix B – Study Two

B1: Initial Email Correspondence – Grassroots Coaches

Dear

I hope this email finds you well.

I write with regards to a current research project I am embarking upon. This project is part of my wider PhD thesis within Northumbria University and I am hoping you may be able to signpost me towards both appropriate grassroots soccer coaches, currently coaching within the foundation phase who may be interested in taking part.

The project is going to be investigating the coaches in terms of their current philosophical viewpoints, their previous experiences, and their practical coaching behaviours and activities.The study is broken into two main elements, in terms of the grassroots coaches, with the first part being an interview with the second being field based, observing their coaching within theirgrassroots club environment.

At this point I think it is important to highlight that this project is aimed to be development rather than critical, so any interested participants should rest assured should they feel any anxiety about getting involved.

If I can provide any further information I would be delighted to do so.Looking

forward to hearing from you.

Kind regardsDavid

David Hooper PhD Candidate Tel. 07427125747

Department of Sport, Exercise and RehabilitationFaculty of Health and Life Sciences Northumberland Building 431
Northumbria UniversityNewcastle Upon Tyne NE1 8ST

B2: Participant Information Sheet

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological andepistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David Hooper

You are being invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide it is important foryou to read this leaflet so you understand why the study is being carried out and what it will involve.

Reading this leaflet, discussing it with others or asking any questions you might have will helpyou decide whether or not you would like to take part.

What is the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project is to identify the philosophical viewpoints of grassroots coaches, along with their previous experiences and practical knowledge. Therefore, the study aims to develop an understanding of the philosophical awareness of grassroots coaches to aid in the increase in the alignment of a grassroots coach's philosophy and coaching practice.

Why have I been invited?

You have been selected to take part in this study as you are currently a grassroots coach, coaching within grassroots football, in the foundation phase on a voluntary basis and are qualified to maximum level 2 in Football Coaching.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. It is your personal choice.

What will happen if I take part?

Should you give your consent to participate in the research study you are required to completea semi-structured interview. The interview will be used to identify your philosophical viewpoints that you utilise as a grassroot coach, and your practice. The additional themes of your coaching philosophy and pedagogy will be discussed as well as identifying how you would implement your suggestions to achieve specific outcomes.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There will be a time period 60-120 minutes given up to participate in the interview. No other disadvantages exist.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The possible benefits of taking part in this research study is the opportunity to think critically about your coaching philosophy and reflect upon how you could develop this further. Consequential improvements can be made to coaching practice.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential and anonymous?

Consent forms containing your name will be completed before the research study commences,however, the names and information provided on the consent forms will be kept separate fromthe data collected through the use of participant identification numbers. In the research study you will be referred to and identified through use of pseudonyms. Similarly, you will not be identifiable in any published material resulting from the research.

How will my data be stored?

The research data collected will be stored securely and remain in its original format and no alterations will be made from the original source. The general findings from the study may bepublished in a journal or presented at a conference. However, if any of the data you provide isused you will be referred to under a pseudonym to preserve your anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be used to form a part of the researcher's larger PhD study. Thereis a further possibility that data will be published in journal articles and presented at academic conferences Participant confidentiality will be assured throughout by the removal of all names.Participants will be recognised through numerical value. Should the research be presented or published in any form, then that information will be generalised (i.e. your personal informationor data will not be identifiable). Paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. This will be kept separate from any data and will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Who is organising and funding the Study?

The study is organised by the researcher and the research team and self-funded by NorthumbriaUniversity.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study and its protocol have been reviewed and received full ethical approval from the Department of Sport, Health and Rehabilitation Ethics Committee in accordance with the School of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee,

University of Northumbria: NewcastleUpon Tyne.

Contact for further information:

Researcher email:

d.hooper@northumbria.ac.uk

Supervisor email:

spencer.boyle@northumbria.

ac.uk

Name of another person who can provide independent information or advice about theproject

Mic Wilkinson (mic.wilkinson@northumbria.ac.uk)

B3: Generic Informed Consent Form

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological andepistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David Hooper

Participant Code: ___

please tick where applicable	
I have carefully read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.	☐
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have receivedsatisfactory answers.	☐
I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reasonfor withdrawing, and without prejudice.	☐
I agree to take part in this study.	☐
I would like to receive feedback on the overall results of the study at the email address givenbelow.	☐

Email address……

Signature of participant.....
Date.....……..

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....…….

Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor
.....

Signature of researcher.....
Date.....……..

(NAME IN BLOCK
LETTERS).....…….

B4: Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent Form

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

FOR USE WHEN PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS/TAPE RECORDINGS WILL BE TAKEN

Project title: A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological andepistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David HooperParticipant Code: _____

I hereby confirm that I give consent for the following recordings to be made:

Recording	Purpose	Consent
Voice Recordings	Interviewing examining the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches.	

Clause B: I understand that the recording(s) may also be used for teaching/research purposes and may be presented to students/researchers in an educational/research context. My name or other personal information will never be associated with the recording(s).
Tick the box to indicate your consent to Clause B ☐

Clause C: I understand that the recording(s) may be published in an appropriatejournal/textbook or on an appropriate Northumbria University webpage. My name or otherpersonal information will never be associated with the recording(s). I understand that I havethe right to withdraw consent at any time prior to publication, but that once the recording(s)are in the public domain there may be no opportunity for the effective withdrawal of consent. Tick the box to indicate your consent to Clause C ☐

Signature of participant.....
Date.....……..

Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor

.....
Date.....……..

Signature of researcher.....
Date.....……..

B5: Participant De-Brief

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET

Project Title: A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological andepistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David Hooper

1. What was the purpose of the project? The purpose of the study aims to identify what grassroots soccer coaches outline as their philosophical viewpoints along with what they believe are the key components in terms of practical coaching for soccer learning environments during childhood (foundation phase).
2. How will I find out about the results? If you wish to receive the general results of the research study you should contact: The Principal Investigator: Principal Investigator Contact Name: David Hooper Principal Investigator Contact E-mail D.Hooper@northumbria.ac.uk
3. What will happen to the information I have provided? All information collected from each participant within this research study will be analysed together as a single set of data. Once the analysis process has been completed the raw data collected will be managed in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). The general results from the data analysis within this research study will be used in the research team‘s PhD assessment which the principal investigator will review. The study may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.
4. Will I receive individual Feedback? No individual feedback will be provided.
5. Have I been deceived in any way during the project? No
6. If I change my mind and wish to withdraw the information I have provided, how do **I do this?**

You have the right to withdraw from this research study at any time. In order to do this youshould contact the principle investigator via the contact details provided and state that you no longer wish to take part in this research study - you do not need/have to provide reasons for your withdrawal.

Contact Name: David Hooper
Contact E-mail: D.Hooper@northumbria.ac.uk

The data collected in this study may also be published in scientific journals or presented at conferences. Information and data gathered during this research study will only be available to the research team identified in the information sheet. Should the research be presented or published in any form, all data will be anonymous (i.e. your personal information or data will not be identifiable).

All information and data gathered during this research will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act and will be destroyed **60** months following the conclusion of the study. If the research is published in a scientific journal it may be kept for longer before being destroyed. During that time the data may be used by members of the research team only for purposes appropriate to the research question, but at no point will your personal information or data be revealed. Insurance companies and employers will not be given any individual's personal information, nor any data provided by them, and nor will we allow access to the police, securityservices, social services, relatives or lawyers, unless forced to do so by the courts.

If you wish to receive feedback about the findings of this research study then please contact the researcher at **d.hooper@northumbria.ac.uk**

This study and its protocol have received full ethical approval from Faculty of Health and LifeSciences Research Ethics Committee. If you require confirmation of this, or if you have any concerns or worries concerning this research, or if you wish to register a complaint, please contact the Chair of this Committee (Dr Nick Neave: nick.neave@northumbria.ac.uk), statingthe title of the research project and the name of the researcher: David Hooper.

B6: Interview Schedule – Grassroots Coach Interviews

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

GRASSROOTS COACH INTERVIEW

Welcome.
Introduce myself.
State purpose of interview.Agree maximum duration.Ensure comfort.

Section One: Background.
Coaching background. (How many years? What age groups? How did you start?)
Playing background. (How many years? What age groups? How did you start?)
Education background. (What level? How did you find education?)
Coach education qualifications. (Which qualifications have been most useful?
How do youfeel about coach education?
Other relevant qualifications?
Mentoring, development and learning activities. (Do you partake in formal or informalmentoring activities?)

Section Two: Values and Ethics.
What guides your coaching?
What are your core beliefs or values?
Are you always able to implement this exactly as you would hope?What sort of things challenge or constrain your values?
Are you ever faced with ethical or moral dilemmas?What sort of other challenges are you faced with?
What kind of example do you try to set?

Section Three: Ontology and Phenomenology.
What is the purpose of coaching?
What do you think are your roles in terms of your participants, that is, grassroots coaches?What about your colleagues?
What is it like being a coach at your club?What do you get out of being a coach?

Section Four: Epistemology.
How do athletes learn?
How do you support this?
What does this look like?
How do know these approaches are effective?
Do you think all of your players learn in the same way?

How do you learn?

Section Five: Coaching "philosophy".
What is your coaching philosophy?Has it always been this way?
What has influenced how you coach?When do you not coach like this?

Section Six: Coaching practice.
How do you implement your philosophy? What would you say are key behaviours? What would you say are key tasks/activities?How do you know these are effective?
What are of support would be beneficial to yourself and other grassroots coaches in terms ofcoach education?

Section Seven: Close.
Anything to add?
Thank you.

Appendix C – Study Three

C1: Continuation Email Correspondence – Grassroots Coaches

Dear

I hope this email finds you well.

I write with regards to the current research project I am working on, and that you have alreadycontributed to. As you know, this project is part of my wider PhD thesis within Northumbria University and I am hoping you may be keen to continue with the practical element of the study. I am looking to observe appropriate grassroots soccer coaches, currently coaching within the foundation phase who may be interested in taking part. Ideally, these coaches will have already undertaken the interview phase.

The observations will take place at your own grassroots club environment and will last approximately 6 hours, over a number of weeks.

The project is going to be investigating the coaches in terms of their current philosophical viewpoints, their previous experiences, and their practical coaching behaviours and activities. The study is broken into two main elements, in terms of the grassroots coaches, with the first part being an interview with the second being field based, observing their coaching within theirgrassroots club environment.

At this point I think it is important to highlight that this project is aimed to be development rather than critical, so any interested participants should rest assured should they feel any anxiety about getting involved.

If I can provide any further information I would be delighted to do so.Looking

forward to hearing from you.

Kind regardsDavid

David Hooper PhD Candidate Tel. 07427125747

Department of Sport, Exercise and RehabilitationFaculty of Health and Life Sciences Northumberland Building 431
Northumbria UniversityNewcastle Upon Tyne NE1 8ST

C2: Participant Information Sheet

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David Hooper

What is the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project is to identify the practical coaching behaviours of grassroots coaches, along with their delivered activities. Therefore, the study aims to observe grassroots coaches in their own coaching environment to aid in the increasing in the alignment of a grassroots coach's philosophy and coaching practice.

Why have I been invited?

You have been selected to take part in this study as you are currently a grassroots coach, coaching within grassroots football, in the foundation phase on a voluntary basis and are qualified to maximum level 2 in Football Coaching.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. It is your personal choice.

What will happen if I take part?

Should you give your consent to participate in the research study you are required to complete 6 hours' worth of filmed coaching delivery within your own environment. The recorded footage will be used to identify the key coaching behaviours and activities displayed.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There will be a time period 6 hours given up to participate in the study. No other disadvantagesexist.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The possible benefits of taking part in this research study is the opportunity to think critically about your coaching practice and reflect upon how you could develop your coaching further. Consequential improvements can be made to coaching practice.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential and anonymous?

Consent forms containing your name will be completed before the research study commences,however, the names and information provided on the consent forms will be kept separate fromthe data collected through the use of participant identification numbers. In the research study you will be referred to and identified through use of pseudonyms. Similarly, you will not be identifiable in any published material resulting from the research.

How will my data be stored?

The research data collected will be stored securely and remain in its original format and no alterations will be made from the original source. The general findings from the study may bepublished in a journal or presented at a conference. However, if any of the data you provide isused you will be referred to under a pseudonym to preserve your anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be used to form a part of the researcher's larger PhD study. Thereis a further possibility that data will be published in journal articles and presented at academic conferences Participant confidentiality will be assured throughout by the removal of all names.Participants will be recognised through numerical value. Should the research be presented or published in any form, then that information will be generalised (i.e. your personal informationor data will not be identifiable). Paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. This will be kept separate from any data and will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Who is organising and funding the Study?

The study is organised by the researcher and the research team and self-funded by NorthumbriaUniversity.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study and its protocol have been reviewed and received full ethical approval from the Department of Sport, Health and Rehabilitation Ethics Committee in accordance with the School of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee, University of Northumbria: NewcastleUpon Tyne.

Contact for further information:

Researcher email: d.hooper@northumbria.ac.uk

Supervisor email: spencer.boyle@northumbria.ac.uk

Name of another person who can provide independent information or advice about the project

Mic Wilkinson (mic.wilkinson@northumbria.ac.uk)

C3: Generic Informed Consent Form

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David HooperParticipant Code: _____

please tick where applicable

I have carefully read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.	☐
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have receivedsatisfactory answers.	☐
I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reasonfor withdrawing, and without prejudice.	☐
I agree to take part in this study.	☐
I would like to receive feedback on the overall results of the study at the email address givenbelow.	☐

Email address……

Signature of participant..... Date.....……. (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....…….
Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor .....
Signature of researcher..... Date.....……. (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....…….

C4: Assent Form for Children

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

ASSENT FORM for Children

(To be completed once parental/guardian has consented for children <16 years)

Project Title: An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.

Principal Researcher: David Hooper

Tick the boxes if you agree

- **I have read and understand the information about the study.**
- **I have asked all the questions about the study that I want to.**
- **My questions have been answered.**
- **I was told everything I want to know about what I have to do to be in thestudy.**
- **I know I can stop being in the study whenever I want, for any reason andI will still be looked after the same.**
- **I agree to be in this study.**

_____

My Name

_____ _____ _____

Researchers Name Date

Researcher's signature

C5: Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent Form

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

FOR USE WHEN PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS/TAPE RECORDINGSWILL BE TAKEN

Project title: An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.

Principal Investigator: David HooperParticipant Code: _____

I hereby confirm that I give consent for the following recordings to be made:

Recording	Purpose	Consent
Voice Recordings	An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.	

Clause B: I understand that the recording(s) may also be used for teaching/research purposes and may be presented to students/researchers in an educational/research context. My name or other personal information will never be associated with the recording(s).
Tick the box to indicate your consent to Clause B ☐

Clause C: I understand that the recording(s) may be published in an appropriatejournal/textbook or on an appropriate Northumbria University webpage. My name or otherpersonal information will never be associated with the recording(s). I understand that I havethe right to withdraw consent at any time prior to publication, but that once the recording(s)are in the public domain there may be no opportunity for the effective withdrawal of consent. Tick the box to indicate your consent to Clause C ☐

Signature of participant.....
Date.....……..
Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor

..... Date.....……..

Signature of researcher..... Date.....……..

C6: Participant De-Brief

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF

Project Title: An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches.

Principal Researcher: David Hooper

1. What was the purpose of the project? The purpose of the study aims to identify what grassroots soccer coaches outline as their philosophical viewpoints along with what they believe are the key components in terms of practical coaching for soccer learning environments during childhood (foundation phase).
2. How will I find out about the results? If you wish to receive the general results of the research study you should contact: The Principal Investigator: Principal Investigator Contact Name: David Hooper Principal Investigator Contact E-mail D.Hooper@northumbria.ac.uk
3. What will happen to the information I have provided? All information collected from each participant within this research study will be analysed together as a single set of data. Once the analysis process has been completed the raw data collected will be managed in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). The general results from the data analysis within this research study will be used in the research team's PhD assessment which the principal investigator will review. The study may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.
4. Will I receive individual Feedback? No individual feedback will be provided.
5. Have I been deceived in any way during the project? No
6. If I change my mind and wish to withdraw the information I have provided, how do **I do this?**

You have the right to withdraw from this research study at any time. In order to do this you should contact the principle investigator via the contact details provided and state that you no longer wish to take part in this research study - you do not need/have to provide reasons for your withdrawal.

Contact Name: David Hooper
Contact E-mail: D.Hooper@northumbria.ac.uk

The data collected in this study may also be published in scientific journals or presented at conferences. Information and data gathered during this research study will only be available to the research team identified in the information sheet. Should the research be presented or published in any form, all data will be anonymous (i.e. your personal information or data will not be identifiable).

All information and data gathered during this research will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act and will be destroyed **60** months following the conclusion of the study. If the research is published in a scientific journal it may be kept for longer before being destroyed. During that time the data may be used by members of the research team only for purposes appropriate to the research question, but at no point will your personal information or data be revealed. Insurance companies and employers will not be given any individual's personal information, nor any data provided by them, and nor will we allow access to the police, securityservices, social services, relatives or lawyers, unless forced to do so by the courts.

If you wish to receive feedback about the findings of this research study then please contact the researcher at **d.hooper@northumbria.ac.uk**

This study and its protocol have received full ethical approval from Faculty of Health and LifeSciences Research Ethics Committee. If you require confirmation of this, or if you have any concerns or worries concerning this research, or if you wish to register a complaint, please contact the Chair of this Committee (Dr Nick Neave: nick.neave@northumbria.ac.uk), statingthe title of the research project and the name of the researcher: David Hooper.

C7: Overview of Coach Raw Data (Totals)

	Total							
Behaviour	**Coach 1 CR**	**Coach 2 KH**	**Coach 3 SH**	**Coach 4 PL**	**Coach 5 LS**	**Coach 6 MW**	**Coach 7 TF**	**Coach 8 TR**
01. Positive Modelling	10	39	0	67	0	184	41	95
02. Negative Modelling	26	32	0	68	0	109	14	19
03. Physical Assistance	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0
04. Specific Feedback - positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93
05. Specific Feedback - negative	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	69
06. General Feedback - positive	80	40	27	54	65	67	78	190
07. General Feedback - negative	80	19	153	61	44	28	48	100
08. Corrective Feedback	0	0	0	22	0	36	25	37
09. Instruction	280	183	168	567	290	149	149	188
10. Humour	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	14
11. Hustle	110	180	31	85	169	272	170	213
12. Praise	96	254	65	58	421	239	207	193
13. Punishment	0	0	52	0	0	0	0	0
14. Scold	5	0	72	0	0	0	0	0
15. Uncodable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16. Silence	2416	1375	2404	2319	2294	1552	2091	1712
16a. On task	*2265*	*1265*	*2254*	*2117*	*2134*	*1415*	*1945*	*1591*
16b. Off task	*151*	*110*	*150*	*202*	*160*	*137*	*146*	*121*
17. Question	162	620	77	31	18	111	21	208

17a. Convergent	142	515	62	28	18	96	21	150
17b. Divergent	20	105	15	3	0	15	0	58
18. Response to a question	11	21	321	191	50	107	40	79
19. Management - direct	606	612	497	555	447	618	592	613
20. Management - indirect	345	314	229	197	157	206	322	291
21. Management - criticisms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22. Verbal Protocol Analyis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23. Confer with Assistants	107	627	11	0	51	268	122	0
24. Player / Official Talk	0	0	180	157	103	67	61	45
TOTAL	**4354**	**4320**	**4287**	**4432**	**4109**	**4036**	**3981**	**4159**
Recipient (-silence)								
Individual	394	746	344	828	526	790	591	731
Group	293	440	315	449	243	359	294	449
Team	1144	1124	1144	679	943	1259	944	1227
Other	107	635	180	157	103	67	61	45
TOTAL	**1938**	**2945**	**1983**	**2113**	**1815**	**2475**	**1890**	**2452**
Timing (-silence)								
Pre	598	1057	676	886	648	1039	712	809
Concurrent	352	518	446	503	438	709	368	481
Post	988	1370	861	724	726	736	810	1162
TOTAL	**1938**	**2945**	**1983**	**2113**	**1812**	**2484**	**1890**	**2452**
Content (-silence)								
Technical	515	1051	323	603	360	621	317	609
Tactical	359	794	350	194	42	161	86	394
Other	1064	1100	1310	1316	1413	1702	1487	1449
TOTAL	**1938**	**2945**	**1983**	**2113**	**1815**	**2484**	**1890**	**2452**

	Total							
Practice States	**Coach 1 CR**	**Coach 2 KH**	**Coach 3 SH**	**Coach 4 PL**	**Coach 5 LS**	**Coach 6 MW**	**Coach 7 TF**	**Coach 8 TR**
Physiological	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:06:00	00:00:00	00:05:55	00:00:00
Technical Practice	01:52:55	00:29:10	00:39:10	02:20:30	01:20:10	01:44:15	01:56:40	00:16:15
Skills Practice	01:27:05	01:04:50	00:08:15	00:00:00	00:29:20	00:42:25	00:49:20	00:46:40
Functional Practice	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:15:10	00:00:00
	03:20:00	**01:34:00**	**00:47:25**	**02:20:30**	**01:55:30**	**02:26:40**	**03:07:05**	**01:02:55**
Playing States								
Phase of Play	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:13:05	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	02:02:30
Possession Game	00:20:00	01:35:30	00:00:00	01:43:35	00:24:05	00:18:45	00:00:00	00:00:00
Conditioned Game	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00
Small Sided Game	01:22:00	01:26:55	03:19:10	00:51:15	01:49:55	01:20:40	01:08:40	01:08:20
Full Sided Game	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00
	01:42:00	**03:02:25**	**03:32:15**	**02:34:50**	**02:14:00**	**01:39:25**	**01:08:40**	**03:10:50**
Other States								
Management / Transition	01:00:50	01:23:35	01:29:20	01:14:00	01:32:55	01:30:15	01:16:00	01:32:50
	01:00:50	**01:23:35**	**01:29:20**	**01:14:00**	**01:32:55**	**01:30:15**	**01:16:00**	**01:32:50**
Total	**06:02:50**	**06:00:00**	**05:49:00**	**06:09:20**	**05:42:25**	**05:36:20**	**05:31:45**	**05:46:35**

Appendix D – Study Four

D1: Initial Email Correspondence – Coach Educators

Dear

I hope this email finds you well.

I write with regards to a current research project I am embarking upon. This project is part of my wider PhD thesis within Northumbria University and I am hoping you may be able to signpost me towards both appropriate FA colleagues and Coach educators, currently delivering coach education within the foundation phase who may be interested in taking part. Of course, I would like you to take part as well.

The project is going to be investigating the coach educators in terms of their current perceptionsin terms of the grassroots coaches they work with. We would discuss things like philosophical viewpoints, their previous experiences (grassroots coaches), and the practical coaching behaviours and activities of the grassroots coaches. The study is an interview which can be completed over the phone as I know we are all spread out across the country.

At this point I think it is important to highlight that this project is aimed to be development rather than critical, so any interested participants should rest assured should they feel any anxiety about getting involved.

If I can provide any further information I would be delighted to do so.Looking

forward to hearing from you.

Kind regardsDavid

David Hooper PhD Candidate Tel. 07427125747

Department of Sport, Exercise and RehabilitationFaculty of Health and Life Sciences Northumberland Building 431
Northumbria UniversityNewcastle Upon Tyne NE1 8ST

D2: Participant Information Sheet

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values,belief and practices from the viewpoint of expert coach educators

Principal Investigator: David Hooper

You are being invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide it is important for you to read this leaflet so you understand why the study is being carried out and what it will involve.

Reading this leaflet, discussing it with others or asking any questions you might have will help you decide whether or not you would like to take part.

What is the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project is to identify how elite coach educators would support the development of helping grassroots coaches integrate their coaching philosophy into their coaching practice. Previous research found that the practicalities of the aforementioned process is something that grassroots coaches find challenging. Therefore, the study aims to develop an understanding of the type of recommendations elite coach educators would suggest to increase the alignment of a grassroots coaches philosophy and coaching practice.

Why have I been invited?

You have been selected to take part in this study as you are currently/or have previously been, an elite coach educator working for The Football Association (full or part time), and arequalified to minimum level 3 (FA youth award or UEFA B Licence in Football Coaching).

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. It is your personal choice.

What will happen if I take part?

Should you give your consent to participate in the research study you are required to completea semi-structured, focus group, interview. The interview will be used to identify your perceptions of the support needed for grassroot coaches and your

rationale for doing so. The additional themes of your coaching philosophy and pedagogy will be discussed as well asidentifying how you would implement your suggestions to achieve specific outcomes.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There will be a time period 60-120 minutes given up to participate in the interview. No otherdisadvantages exist.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The possible benefits of taking part in this research study is the opportunity to think criticallyabout your coach education practice and reflect upon how you could support grassroots coaches further. Consequential improvements can be made to coaching practice.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential and anonymous?

Consent forms containing your name will be completed before the research study commences,however, the names and information provided on the consent forms will be kept separate fromthe data collected through the use of participant identification numbers. In the research study you will be referred to and identified through use of pseudonyms. Similarly, you will not be identifiable in any published material resulting from the research.

How will my data be stored?

The research data collected will be stored securely and remain in its original format and no alterations will be made from the original source. The general findings from the study may bepublished in a journal or presented at a conference. However, if any of the data you provide isused you will be referred to under a pseudonym to preserve your anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be used to form a part of the researcher's larger PhD study. There is a further possibility that data will be published in journal articles and presented at academic conferences Participant confidentiality will be assured throughout by the removal of all names. Participants will be recognised through numerical value. Should the research bepresented or published in any form, then that information will be generalised (i.e. your personal information or data will not be identifiable). Paper records will be stored in a lockedfiling cabinet and electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer.
This will be kept separate from any data and will be treated in accordance with the DataProtection Act.

Who is organising and funding the Study?

The study is organised by the researcher and the research team and self-funded by NorthumbriaUniversity.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study and its protocol have been reviewed and received full ethical approval from the Department of Sport, Health and Rehabilitation Ethics Committee in accordance with the School of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee, University of Northumbria: NewcastleUpon Tyne.

D3: Generic Informed Consent Form

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values, beliefand practices from the viewpoint of expert coach educators

Principal Investigator: David HooperParticipant Code: _____

	please tick where applicable
I have carefully read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.	☐
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have receivedsatisfactory answers.	☐
I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reasonfor withdrawing, and without prejudice.	☐
I agree to take part in this study.	
I would like to receive feedback on the overall results of the study at the email address givenbelow.	☐

Email address……

Signature of participant..... Date.....……. (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....…….
Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor .....
Signature of researcher..... Date.....……. (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....…….

D4: Video/Voice Recording Informed Consent Form

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

FOR USE WHEN PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS/TAPE RECORDINGSWILL BE TAKEN

Project title: A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values, beliefand practices from the viewpoint of expert coach educators

Principal Investigator: David HooperParticipant Code: _____

I hereby confirm that I give consent for the following recordings to be made:

Recording	Purpose	Consent
Voice Recordings	A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccercoaches' values, belief and practices from the viewpoint of expert coach educators	

Clause B: I understand that the recording(s) may also be used for teaching/research purposes and may be presented to students/researchers in an educational/research context. My name or other personal information will never be associated with the recording(s).
Tick the box to indicate your consent to Clause B ☐

Clause C: I understand that the recording(s) may be published in an appropriatejournal/textbook or on an appropriate Northumbria University webpage. My name or otherpersonal information will never be associated with the recording(s). I understand that I havethe right to withdraw consent at any time prior to publication, but that once the recording(s)are in the public domain there may be no opportunity for the effective withdrawal of consent. Tick the box to indicate your consent to Clause C ☐

Signature of participant.....
Date.....……..
Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor.....
Date.....……..

Signature of researcher..... Date.....……..

D5: Participant De-Brief

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF

Project Title: A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values,belief and practices from the viewpoint of expert coach educators

Principal Researcher: David Hooper

1. What was the purpose of the project?

The purpose of the project was to identify how elite coach educators would support the development of helping grassroots coaches integrate their coaching philosophy into their coaching practice. Previous research found that the practicalities of the aforementioned process is something that grassroots coaches find challenging. Therefore, the study aimed to develop an understanding of the type of recommendations elite coach educators would
suggest to increase the alignment of a grassroots coaches philosophy and coaching practice.

2. How will I find out about the results?

If you wish to receive the general results of the research study you should contact:

The Principal Investigator:
Principal Investigator Contact Name: David Hooper
Principal Investigator Contact E-mail D.Hooper@northumbria.ac.uk

3. What will happen to the information I have provided?

All information collected from each participant within this research study will be analysed together as a single set of data. Once the analysis process has been completed the raw data collected will be managed in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). The general results from the data analysis within this research study will be used in the research team's PhD assessment which the principal investigator will review. The study may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

4. Will I receive individual Feedback?

No individual feedback will be provided.

5. Have I been deceived in any way during the project?

No

6. If I change my mind and wish to withdraw the information I have provided, how do
I do this?

You have the right to withdraw from this research study at any time. In order to do this youshould contact the principle investigator via the contact details provided and state that you no longer wish to take part in this research study - you do not need/have to provide reasons for your withdrawal.

Contact Name: David Hooper
Contact E-mail: D.Hooper@northumbria.ac.uk

The data collected in this study may also be published in scientific journals or presented at conferences. Information and data gathered during this research study will only be available to the research team identified in the information sheet. Should the research be presented or published in any form, all data will be anonymous (i.e. your personal information or data will not be identifiable).

All information and data gathered during this research will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act and will be destroyed **60** months following the conclusion of the study. If the research is published in a scientific journal it may be kept for longer before being destroyed. During that time the data may be used by members of the research team only for purposes appropriate to the research question, but at no point will your personal information or data be revealed. Insurance companies and employers will not be given any individual's personal information, nor any data provided by them, and nor will we allow access to the police, securityservices, social services, relatives or lawyers, unless forced to do so by the courts.

If you wish to receive feedback about the findings of this research study then please contact the researcher at **d.hooper@northumbria.ac.uk**

This study and its protocol have received full ethical approval from Faculty of Health and LifeSciences Research Ethics Committee. If you require confirmation of this, or if you have any concerns or worries concerning this research, or if you wish to register a complaint, please contact the Chair of this Committee (Dr Nick Neave: nick.neave@northumbria.ac.uk), statingthe title of the research project and the name of the researcher: David Hooper.

D6: Interview Schedule – Coach Educator Interviews

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

COACH EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

Welcome.

Introduce myself.

State purpose of interview.Agree maximum duration.Ensure comfort.

Section One: Background.

Coaching background.Playing background. Education background.

Coach education qualifications.

Section Two: Values and Ethics.

What are your core beliefs or values?

Are you always able to implement this exactly as you would hope?What sort of things challenge or constrain your values?

What sort of other challenges are you faced with?What kind of example do you try to set?

Section Three: Ontology and Phenomenology.

What is the purpose of coaching?

What do you think are your roles in terms of your participants, that is, grassroots coaches?What about your colleagues?

What do you get out of being a coach educator?

Section Four: Epistemology.

How do athletes learn?How do coaches learn?How do you learn?

Section Five: Coaching "philosophy".

What is your coaching philosophy?

How was this developed? Who influenced your philosophy?How have you tried to practically implement this?

How might grassroots coaches practically implement their philosophy?

Section Six: Coaching practice.

What would you say are key behaviours?

How would you support grassroots coaches with implementing their coaching philosophypractically?
What might this look like?
What sort of action plan would they need?
How would you suggest developing coach education?

Section Seven: Close.
Anything to add?
Thank you.

Appendix E - Publications Emanating from Thesis E1: Peer Reviewed Publications

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2020). A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches. *Sport Coaching Review.* (in review)

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2020). An investigation of the practice activities and coaching behaviours of grassroots-level youth soccer coaches. (in preparation)

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2021). A retrospective reflective examination of grassroots soccer coaches' values, beliefs, and practices from the viewpoint of coach educators.(in preparation)

E2: Selected List of Conference Presentations

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2015). Sport Coaching Practice in Grassroots Sport: ASystematic Review. *PGR Student Conference.* (Northumbria University, December 2015).

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2016). Sport Coaching Practice in Grassroots Sport: ASystematic Review. *21st European College of Sport Science Congress.* (Vienna, July 2016).

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2016). Sport Coaching Practice in Grassroots Sport: A Systematic Review. *The FA Annual Staff Conference.* (St Georges Park, Burton, December 2016).

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2017). A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches. *PGR Student Conference.* (Northumbria University, September 2017).

Hooper, D., Boyle, S. E., & Whyte, I. (2017). A philosophical exploration, examining the axiological, ontological and epistemological viewpoints of grassroots soccer coaches. *The FAAnnual Staff Conference*. (St Georges Park, Burton, December 2015).

Hooper, D., & Sanders, R. (2020). The role of coaching on the wellbeing of staff mental health. *Public Sector Annual Managerial Conference*. (Old Trafford Stadium, Manchester,March 2020).

Hooper, D., & Sanders, R. (2020). Dealing with depression and anxiety during COVID.
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